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SIR GUY'S SECRET.

(Continued from Wide Awake Library, No. 342.)



"If that young scamp doesn't get out of the parish in an hour he shall have a taste of prison discipline!"

CHAPTER I.

THE DETECTIVE IN A HORNET'S NEST—DEVEREL'S SECOND ADVERTISEMENT—WILLIE ANDERSON'S RETURN, AND HOW HE ESCAPED.

LEAVING Willie in his uncomfortable position, imprisoned in the dark secret recess, in the house of Dr. Langton, let us now return to Mason's circus.

On the third day after the lad's flight, when the circus was pitched at a town much nearer London, the private detective reappeared.

Inquiries at the railway station, on the morning after his pursuit of Willie Anderson had

been arrested by the antics of the supposed goblin, had convinced the detective that the young acrobat had gone to London, whither he followed him, and reported to his principal that he had discovered the lad in whom Messrs. Crafter and Carson were interested, but had lost sight of him.

This report being communicated at once to Sir Guy Deverel's solicitors, they circulated a notice to the police, offering a reward for any information that might lead to the discovery of the lad, whose appearance was described.

Two days having passed without any tidings, and the detective's visits to all the circus and

music-hall agencies in the metropolis having been fruitless, his employers again sent him to Mason's circus, in the hope that he might be able to glean from some member of the company a clue to Willie's present abode.

On reaching the circus, and seeing a groom leading a horse into the stables, he inquired at once whether the missing lad had returned.

"He hasn't performed since the night he took his hook, and I haven't seen him," the groom replied. "This lad saw the last of him, I believe," he added, indicating Devilshoof, otherwise Cupid, who was sitting on the back of a horse, grimacing at a groom a few stalls distant.

Cupid recognized the detective, and immediately slipped off the horse, and made a very profound bow, but in a most grotesque manner.

"Can you tell me where he is now, my lad?" the detective inquired.

"Meaning my talented partner?" said Cupid.

"Ay, Master Anderson, otherwise Alphonso," replied the detective.

"Come this way, my lord," said Cupid, with mock politeness.

Not suspecting for a moment that this boy in a pilot jacket was the author of his fright, the detective followed him into the ring, where Tom Nobbs was rehearsing a trick with a performing mule, while Percy Bellingham enacted the part to be assigned, in its public exhibition, to the ring-master.

"That young gentleman is my talented partner's most particular friend, my lord," said Cupid, indicating the young equestrian.

The detective nodded to the clown, and turned to Percy, while Cupid disappeared in the direction of the dressing-rooms.

"Has anything been heard of Alfonso?" the detective inquired.

"Nothing," replied Percy; "you saw him later than anyone connected with the circus, I believe."

"I lost sight of him," said the detective. "Has he any friends in London, do you know?"

"Not that I am aware of," replied Percy. "And I don't know that he has gone to London."

"We know your game," said Tom Nobbs. "It was a shabby trick, though, to pretend that you had got a warrant. I don't believe you are a police detective at all, and it would serve you right to have you locked up for pretending to be one."

The detective looked confused, and was about to turn away, concluding that nothing else was to be learned, when Devilshoof, who had hastily metamorphosed himself into the semblance of an ape, by putting on a skin dress and a mask, ran into the ring on his hands and feet, executed a series of "flips," and sprang upon the man's shoulders.

The quickness of his movements prevented any suspicion of the transformation on the part of the detective, who first made an ineffectual effort to dislodge the supposed ape, and then called loudly for help.

Neither the clown nor Percy stirred to aid him, however, and he ran towards the stables, shouting and swearing, while Devilshoof screamed, pulled his hair, and pinched his ears.

"Help! Take him off!" roared the detective. "Beat the brute! Confound you all! I'll have law for this!"

The grooms only laughed, however, for they saw through the acrobat's disguise, and rather enjoyed the joke than otherwise.

The frightened and exasperated detective made another effort to rid himself of Devilshoof, who, however, clung to his shoulders as tightly as the Old Man of the Sea clung to those of Sinbad the Sailor, and snarled and made a feint of biting whenever his victim's hands came near him.

The grooms barring his way to the stable entrance, he ran back to the ring and rushed for the opposite side, hoping to get out by the entrance used by the public.

Devilshoof now thought it was time to bring his amusement to a close, and turning around, leaped off his victim's shoulders, to which he gave such a violent push with his feet as he did so, that the man fell prostrate in the sawdust.

Now it was part of the comic business which Tom Nobbs had been rehearsing with the performing mule, that the latter should chase the clown out of the ring, and return carrying a dummy clown with his teeth.

When, therefore, the mule saw the detective prostrate in the ring, he ran up to him, seized the waistband of his trousers with his teeth, and dragged him several yards.

"Help! murder!" cried the detective, and Tom Nobbs, thinking the joke had been carried far enough, went to his aid, and persuaded the mule to drop him. "I'll have the law of you all, see if I don't! Where's the manager?"

"He is not here, nor Mr. Mason, either," replied the clown. "You may consider yourself lucky to have escaped without having your clothes torn off your back."

"Your brutes are devils," said the detective, angrily. "They ought to be chained up. Mr. Mason will hear from me."

He then departed.

Tom Nobbs then dismissed the mule to the stables, and returned to his lodgings.

He was sitting at the fire, smoking his after-

noon pipe, when Percy Bellingham entered hastily and very much excited, with a newspaper in his hand.

"Mr. Nobbs," said he, with sparkling eyes, "here is another advertisement about Anderson. Just read that."

And opening the paper, he directed the clown's attention to the following notice.

"William Anderson, supposed to be traveling with Mason's circus, is earnestly requested to write to his uncle, under cover to Messrs. Crafter and Carson, solicitors, Lincoln's Inn Fields."

The clown read this silently first, and then aloud.

"There could be no harm in writing," observed Mrs. Nobbs.

"No," said the clown, thoughtfully; "but if the lad's with Dr. Langton, as I expect he is, he will be persuaded not to write."

"I wonder what the jolly old doctor's game is?" said Percy. "I don't credit him with undiluted benevolence, of course, because Anderson is a stranger to him, and it is not the way of the world to be disinterestedly benevolent to strangers."

"You are right," observed Nobbs, "and I don't see what can be done. That confounded detective has queered the pitch."

While they sat around the fire, silent and perplexed, Lettie Lennard entered.

"Is it true?" she inquired, eagerly, as she looked from one to another, as if to find an answer in their faces.

"Is what true?" returned Nobbs.

"That Willie has returned," she replied. "Joe Binks says that he saw him about an hour ago on the other side of the common."

"It may be true," said the clown. "I have not heard from him, and have only just seen this advertisement about him."

He handed the paper to Lettie, with his forefinger on the notice to which Percy Bellingham had directed his attention.

"I hope he will write," exclaimed the girl, when she had read it. "He shall, if I can persuade him, for I am sure Dr. Langton is only making a tool of him for his own purposes."

"When did you know Dr. Langton, Lettie?" inquired Mrs. Nobbs.

"When? Oh, a long time ago," replied Lettie. "Not so very long, either," she immediately added. "He is a bad man, and he is a dangerous friend for Willie."

"Perhaps if Willie writes to his uncle the answer will clear away the fog we are in," observed Percy.

"Perhaps that is Willie," exclaimed Lettie, as footsteps came up the stairs, and she turned eagerly towards the door.

It opened at that moment, and Willie Anderson entered.

"Oh, I am so glad!" exclaimed the beautiful girl, clasping her hands together, and then catching those of the young acrobat. "Oh, Willie, dear, where have you been?"

"Welcome, wanderer!" exclaimed Percy, stretching out his hand, which Willie grasped in his own as soon as Lettie released it.

"I have just come from London, and should have been here sooner only I waited for it to get darker," returned Willie.

"Sit down and tell us where you have been," said Mrs. Nobbs.

The young acrobat proceeded to relate all that had happened to him while in the house of Dr. Langton.

"It was not a pleasant position, in that dark hole; and it was all the worse for not knowing what to make of it," said he, continuing the narrative from the point at which we left him.

"The doctor might have put me there to conceal me from the police, or to prevent me from telling what I had seen. You see, I didn't know whether it was him or me they were after."

"I see," observed the clown.

"When the long hours passed away without any one coming near me, I came to the conclusion that the doctor had either been taken or escaped. In that dark place I could form no idea of time, but it seemed many hours before I heard any sound to show that I was not alone in the house. I began to fear that the old woman might have left, or might not know the secret of the spring and the recess, in which case I might be starved to death."

"How dreadful!" said Lettie, with a shudder.

"At last," continued Willie, "I heard footsteps in the room, and I stamped and shouted. Then the bookcase swung around, and I saw the old housekeeper! Dr. Langton had gone, she told me, and she didn't know when he would return. I had made up my mind to leave the house, and though it was late, I told her so, and came away."

"Did you learn anything more of Dr. Langton?" Lettie Lennard inquired.

"I asked the old woman whether he went away with the two men, and she said 'no.' She made no opposition to my leaving, and said that a letter to that address would always reach him if I should wish to write to him."

"Have no more to do with him, Willie," said Lettie, earnestly.

"What you have told us makes me disposed to back Lettie's advice," observed Tom Nobbs. "Look at this advertisement."

Thereupon a council was held, and it was agreed by all present that Lettie's advice was good, and that Willie's best course would be that suggested by the advertisement.

CHAPTER II.

LETTIE AND HER LOVERS—WILLIE ANDERSON ARRESTED—HIS APPEAL TO DR. LANGTON.

LETTIE LENNARD dismounted from her horse at the stable entrance of the circus, and giving the bridle to a groom, proceeded to the arena.

Very beautiful she looked, for the exercise and the frosty air had brought the warm blood to her cheeks, and it glowed through the clear, transparent brown of her skin.

A shade of disappointment fell upon her charming face, however, as she looked around the ring and saw only Beresford, who was standing in a melancholy mood against the pole of the tent.

"Has not Willie Anderson been here this morning?" she asked.

"Dear Miss Lennard, no," said the ring-master, coming towards her with a suddenly brightened countenance. "What can I do for you in the absence of a youth so fortunate as to be inquired for by the queen of the arena?"

"Oh, don't talk nonsense, Mr. Beresford," returned Lettie. "I want to see Anderson and I thought he would be here."

"I heard that he had ventured back," observed Beresford; "but can it be of any consequence to you, Miss Lennard?"

"It can, and it is," said Lettie, turning away.

"Stay, adorable Miss Lennard!" exclaimed the ring-master. "I have long wanted such an opportunity of speaking to you as fortune has now favored me with. Hear me, sweetest creature! I love you to distraction, and when I love thee not, chaos has come again."

"I am sorry for you, Mr. Beresford," returned the pretty equestrienne; "but you had better not waste your love upon me, for I have none to give in return for it."

The disappointed admirer paused, regarding Lettie with mixed feelings of sorrow and anger as she ran out, and then returned to the ring, clutching his hair with both hands.

"It was ever thus with me!" he muttered, as his arms fell to his sides, and he leaned against the ring fence with his eyes lowered to the sawdust.

"I never trained a young gazelle
To glad me with its dark soft eye,
But when I learned to love it well,
It fell in love with a tumbling boy."

As she passed out of the tent, intending to visit the Nobbs, Lettie Lennard encountered Percy Bellingham, whose eyes brightened at the meeting.

"Where are you going?" he asked, when they had shaken hands.

"To see Mrs. Nobbs," the girl replied.

"You must care a deal for her," said Percy. "If you had said you were going to see Anderson, I should have believed you."

"You can do as you like about believing me, Percy Bellingham," returned Lettie, turning away from him.

"Don't be offended, Lettie," said the young equestrian, his tone changing as he spoke to one of earnest deprecation.

"You should not doubt my word, then," returned Lettie, mollified by his change of manner.

"I am going to see Mrs. Nobbs."

"But not for the purpose of seeing Mrs. Nobbs," persisted Percy. "Come, confess that, Lettie, and say that I may walk with you."

"I suppose I may go and see Willie Anderson if I like," said Lettie; "and if you like, you may come with me."

Percy thereupon offered her his arm, and they walked together towards the clown's lodgings.

"I suppose you think more of Anderson than ever, now he is likely to be proved a baronet and a man of property," he observed, when they had walked a few yards in silence.

"You know better than that," returned Lettie, her dark eyes flashing angrily as she spoke. "Did I think more of you, or less of Willie, when you told me your father was Squire Bellingham, of the Old Quarry House?"

"I don't know that you did," said Percy, coloring with the consciousness of having done the beautiful brunette an injustice.

"Then don't say such things," rejoined Lettie.

"Forgive me," he said, with a return of the deprecatory manner.

"Freely, Percy," responded the girl, softening again; "but remember that no friend of Willie Anderson's should need my forgiveness twice. I like you both, but I have known him longer than I have you, and I love him."

Percy refrained from speaking further on the subject, and in a few minutes they reached their destination.

Two men were entering the house in which the Nobbs' lodged, as they arrived.

Percy and Lettie exchanged glances as they saw the two men preceding them up the stairs, and the former observed the rich color fade from the girl's dark cheeks.

One of them opened the door, and Percy and Lettie entered close behind him and his companion.

Willie Anderson sprang to his feet on their entrance, and Nobbs and his wife regarded them with looks of apprehensive inquiry.

"William Anderson?" said one of the strangers, glancing at Willie.

"I am known by that name," returned Willie.

"Then you are my prisoner," said the stranger, unbuttoning his overcoat and showing the uniform of the county constabulary beneath it. "You are charged with uttering a forged note with intent to defraud, and I hold a warrant for your apprehension."

"There was no intent to defraud," said Willie. "Dr. Langton's housekeeper asked me to get it changed for her and I did so, not knowing that it was a forgery."

"You will have to convince a jury of that," said the detective. "In the meantime you will have to go with me."

"There is no help for it, my lad," said Nobbs; "but we will have the old woman brought forward, and soon open the prison doors for you."

"If the doctor has done this, he is the greatest villain on the face of the earth," observed Lettie, warmly.

"Dr. Langton," said the detective, looking from Lettie to his young prisoner. "Is that the gentlemen at Grove House?"

Willie answered in the affirmative.

"I don't know him by that name; but a gentleman known to live there has been suspected of forging bank-notes," said the detective. "If the old housekeeper at Grove House will confirm your story, I don't think you have much to fear; but, in the meantime, my duty is plain; you all see that, I suppose?"

"Yes," said Nobbs.

"It is a shame," exclaimed Lettie; "but never mind, Willie, we all believe you to be innocent, and that you will soon be with us again."

There was a shaking of hands all around, and then Willie went away in custody, and Lettie Lennard hid her face on the shoulder of Mrs. Nobbs, and burst into tears.

Percy Bellingham accompanied his friend to the railway station, whence, in a few minutes, the train started for London.

Tom Nobbs resolved to take upon himself the responsibility of writing to Messrs. Crafter and Carson, relating the circumstances under which he had adopted the lad, describing the person from whom he received him, and urging them to do their utmost to free him from the consequences of the charge now hanging over him.

It was the result of this letter that, when Willie Anderson was placed a few days afterwards before the magistrates of the district in which Grove House was situated, Mr. Carson announced that he appeared for the prisoner.

Then the baker, who had received the note from Willie, entered the witness-box, and gave his evidence, producing the note, which a clerk from the Bank of England pronounced spurious and a forgery.

"Well, prisoner," said the chairman, regarding Willie attentively through his gold-mounted spectacles, "what have you to say to this very serious charge?"

"Only that I believed the note to be a good one, or I would have had nothing to do with it," replied Willie. "I received it from Dr. Langton's housekeeper, who asked me to get it changed for her, as the doctor was out, and she had some money to pay."

"Dr. Langton," said a police inspector, "has been ascertained to be a man known by several

other names, and for whose apprehension a warrant has been issued."

"Oh!" ejaculated the chairman, screwing up his mouth.

And his colleagues on the bench shook their heads.

"I trust that the accused will not be prejudged through his unfortunate connection with the man known to him as Dr. Langton," said Mr. Carson. "I am instructed that Langton invited the accused to his house, and pretended to interest himself in his fortunes, informing him that he is the missing son of a gentleman now deceased, and entitled to a large estate in this county. That statement I have every reason to believe true."

The magistrates looked from Mr. Carson to Willie on hearing this, and evinced increased interest in the case.

"That is the name of the gentleman whose son we believe the accused to be," continued Mr. Carson, handing to the chairman a card, on which he had written the name of Sir Rupert Deverel. "I will call a witness, whose evidence will go very far to corroborate the statement of Dr. Langton. Let Thomas Nobbs be called."

Nobbs immediately stepped into the witness-box, and repeated the statement which he had made in writing to Messrs. Crafter and Carson.

"This is scarcely relevant, I think," observed the clerk.

"It shows, at least, that the accused, believing himself the son of a wealthy man, would not be likely to commit a fraud, especially one by which he did not profit in the least," said Mr. Carson.

"We don't know that he did not profit by the fraud," observed one of the magistrates.

"Then I will confine my further examination of the witness to the question of character," said Mr. Carson. "Now, Mr. Nobbs, you have known the prisoner from the age of three years, and during all that time he has been constantly with you. Now, what has his conduct been?"

"Bono, sir," replied the clown; "couldn't have been better."

"You have found him uniformly honest and truthful."

"Yes, sir," replied Nobbs. "I have never had the slightest reason to doubt either his honesty or his truthfulness."

"Is the housekeeper at Grove House here?" the chairman inquired.

"We intended to call her, but she cannot be found," said Mr. Carson.

The chairman thereupon shook his head, and his colleagues followed his example.

"She has gone away," observed the inspector.

"Then there is really no evidence for the defense," said the chairman. "The prisoner may be, as you, Mr. Carson, allege, the son of a gentleman of property, but it does not follow that he is not guilty of the offense of which he is accused. The uttering has been proved, and is not denied, and the fraudulent intent is matter of inference in the absence of any evidence of character more reliable than that of a strolling mountebank in the eye of the law a vagrant."

Tom Nobbs looked indignant, but his looks were unheeded, and the magistrates, after a brief consultation, committed Willie for trial at the ensuing assizes.

CHAPTER III.

WILLIE'S ESCAPE—THE FLIGHT—THE FISHING-BOAT.

LET us pass quickly over the dreary days of Willie Anderson's incarceration.

The assizes were approaching, and no communication had reached him from Messrs. Crafter and Carson, either with reference to his parentage or concerning the chances of his acquittal or conviction.

He was beginning to take a desponding view of the prospect, deserted as he seemed to be by every one who could serve him, when he received a visit from Dr. Langton.

At the first glance he did not recognize the visitor, whose face was disguised.

"You seem not to remember me, my young friend," said the doctor, with a smile.

"I know you now," returned Willie, who immediately recognized the voice.

And he felt glad, in his present state of mind, to receive a visit, even from the man whom he believed to be the primary cause of the perilous position in which he now stood.

"You know the only friend who can and will help you," said the doctor. "Your uncle will not recognize you while this charge is hanging over you, and as your conviction is as nearly a certainty as can be calculated, you have not a very brilliant career before you."

"Have you come here now only to tell me that?" Willie asked, in a slightly resentful tone.

"You ought to know me better, my young friend," returned the doctor. "I have come here to save you."

"How?" inquired Willie, with a look of surprise.

"By helping you to get away from here," replied Dr. Langton, lowering his voice.

"Impossible!" sighed the young prisoner. "It is the strongest prison in Kent."

"There is no prison so strong that its doors will not yield to a golden key," whispered the doctor.

Willie opened his eyes wider, with a look of eager inquiry, and felt his heart beat quicker as he listened.

"I have secured aid within the prison," continued the visitor; "I had not better fix a time, for it might happen that owing to unforeseen circumstances, you might be disappointed, but arrangements will be made for you to leave here before the assizes come on."

"But where can I go?" inquired Willie.

"To the Continent," replied Dr. Langton. "We will carry out the plan we talked of at Grove House. So keep your spirit up, my young friend, and be prepared for prompt and alert action, when the time comes for it."

He then extended his fat white hand to the young prisoner, who could not, under the circumstances, refuse it, and departed.

Left to himself again, Willie seriously pondered his position, and the prospect opened to him by Dr. Langton's proposal.

He weighed on the one hand, the representations which had been made by the doctor, and which seemed to be confirmed by his uncle's silence and the inaction of Crafter and Carson; and on the other, the prospective dangers of a more intimate connection with Dr. Langton under circumstances which would place him to some extent in the doctor's power.

The balance seemed to be in the favor of the project of escape.

From that moment, therefore, he awaited with eagerness the uncertain hour of his expected liberation.

Several days had elapsed since the visit of Dr. Langton, when the warder, whose duty it was to visit the cell in which he was confined, asked him one evening if he was a sound sleeper.

"I sleep well," he replied; "but I am wide awake as soon as I am aroused."

"You are? Then sleep to-night as usual," said the warder, "but don't take off your clothes; you have a journey before you, and you will have to be ready to start when I call you."

"All right," responded Willie; "I will be ready, no fear."

Excitement prevented him from sleeping, however, and when about one o'clock next morning, he heard footsteps in the corridor, he was sitting on his bed wide awake, and ready to start at a moment's notice.

The footsteps stopped at the door of his cell, and Willie sprang to his feet.

The door was opened, and the warder made a hasty sign to come out, at the same time putting his finger on his lips to enjoin silence.

Willie stepped into the corridor, and the warder, after relocking the door, led the way towards another door at the end of the passage.

There was a watchman in the corridor, but he was at the opposite end, and did not appear either to see or hear them.

The warder unlocked the door at the end of the corridor, Willie following him down a flight of stone stairs, and then they stood in the prison-yard, under the starlit sky.

"Quick," said the warder, crossing the yard at a run, followed by Willie, and opening a door in the high and massive wall; "now, away with you! A friend is close at hand with a chaise."

Willie glanced quickly to the right and the left as the door was closed behind him, and saw in the former direction, about a hundred yards distant, a chaise standing, with a man seated in it.

He walked quickly toward it, and looked inquiringly at the man, whom the darkness prevented him from recognizing.

"Up with you!" exclaimed Dr. Langton, gathering up the reins; and as Willie, recognizing the voice, stepped quickly into the chaise, he drove off at a steady pace on the road leading to Ashford.

"Where are we going?" Willie asked, when he had left the town behind.

"To the coast," replied his liberator. "You know the roads, don't you?"

"Oh, yes," replied Willie; "and I guessed we should make for the coast, as well as knowing

we were going coastward. But it is a long drive to Folkestone or Dover."

"We are not going to either place," cried the doctor.

Willie asked no more questions, but after driving about four miles further they diverged to the northeast, and ascended a very steep incline.

The doctor now drove more slowly, for when they had descended, the way lay through winding lanes, intersecting marshy pastures, and being bordered in parts by wide and deep ditches.

Twice or thrice he halted at a finger-post which he consulted by the light of a match, and then referred by the same flickering gleam to a memorandum of the route, to assure himself that they were going right to their destination.

At length a little beer-house was reached, standing amidst pollard willows, with the sign of the "Jolly Fishermen" swinging and creaking from a post that declined several degrees from the perpendicular.

Here Dr. Langton drew rein, and alighting, struck the door several times with the butt-end of the whip.

"Jump out," he said to Willie, who was not sorry to stretch his limbs and stamp upon the frost-bound earth to quicken the circulation of his blood, after his long ride on that winter morning.

In a few moments a rough-looking man opened the door, and took charge of the horse and chaise, which he led into a stable-yard, while the doctor and Willie entered the house.

"Will you take a drop of anything, mister?" said the man, joining them in a few minutes.

"A glass of brandy will not hurt us," returned the doctor. "We have had a cold drive, and a long one."

The man thereupon produced a stone bottle, from which he filled a small glass of brandy for each of the travelers.

Then they all went out, and presently heard the melancholy sound of the sea, washing the shingly beach.

In a few minutes they stood upon the water's edge, with just life enough to discern a boat, which their conductor loosened from its moorings, and held while they stepped into it, and seated themselves upon the thwarts.

"We shall have a cold row," observed Willie, his teeth chattering as he spoke; "have we far to go?"

"Far enough," replied Dr. Langton, straining his eyes eastward, where, however, nothing was visible but the trackless waste of dark water.

The boatman said nothing, but pushed the boat into deeper water, scrambled into it, and, taking up the oars, pulled towards the open sea.

"What new dangers or trials am I to undergo?" thought Willie.

The fugitives folded their arms over their chests as they encountered the chill wind that swept over the sea, and sat in silence as their boatman pulled steadily out of the Swale, and along the edge of the Whitstable Flats.

Across those broad shallows, Dr. Langton watched intently and anxiously, but no moon shone above them, and the dawn was yet far off.

"Is that Whitstable?" asked the doctor, pointing to a light, when they had reached the northern extremity of the flats, and had Shellness Point on their left.

"That is Whitstable, mister," said the boatman.

"Do you see a small vessel across the shallows?" inquired the doctor.

The boatman's practiced eyes swept the eastern horizon, but the darkness rendered the range of vision very short, and he replied in the negative.

"Pull on," said Dr. Langton.

The eastern horizon was still dark when the boatman, who looked over his shoulder from time to time, announced that a smack was ahead, just at the mouth of the channel, leading to Whitstable Harbor.

Dr. Langton desired him to pull towards her, and in a few minutes a small fishing-boat was seen at the point indicated by the boatman, beating up against the north-easterly wind.

"Smack ahoy!" shouted Dr. Langton. "Is that the *Blue-eyed Maid*?"

"Ay—ay!" came across the dark sea in reply.

In ten minutes more the boat was alongside, and all three scrambled to the deck of the vessel, where they were received by a broad-chested and brown-faced fisherman, wearing an oil-skin hat, a pilot-jacket, and high boots.

"I know you," said the fisherman, singling out Dr. Langton from the group, and regarding him intently.

"Oh!" ejaculated the doctor, returning his look.

"I!" said the fisherman, with emphasis.

"He?" said the doctor, indicating Willie.

"A," returned the fisherman, his gravity relaxing into a broad grin. "I suppose you are the right parties."

"Come below," said Dr. Langton to the boatman, and he led the way to the cabin, followed by Willie and the boatman.

While Willie rubbed his hands before the welcome stove, the doctor took out his purse and gave some money to the boatman, who seemed well contented with his morning's work.

"I wish you a safe and pleasant voyage, mister," said he, as he left the cabin.

Presently the creaking of blocks and flapping of sails was heard, and in a few minutes the smack was running before the wind with a speed that promised well for the fulfilment of the boatman's parting wish.

CHAPTER IV.

MADRID—A DEAD LETTER—THE DOCTOR IN A QUANDARY—THE CIRCO PRICE—AN UNEXPECTED MEETING.

THREE months after their flight from England Willie Anderson and Dr. Langton were sitting at breakfast in the coffee-room of one of the best hotels in Madrid.

The smack which bore them from their native shores had landed them in safety at a small fishing village between Calais and Boulogne, from which latter town they proceeded by rail to the French capital, and thence, after a night's rest, to Madrid.

"We shall be safe there," the doctor had observed, "for there is no convention between England and Spain for the extradition of those who break the laws of either country."

Hence it is that we find them in Madrid when we resume the thread of our story.

Dr. Langton was reading a letter which, with others that lay on the table, had just been brought up by a waiter, and several newspapers, English, French and Spanish, lay on the floor.

Among the letters which he had not yet opened, was one from the dead letter department of the French post-office, and, as he took this up, he knitted his brows, and his countenance evinced some discomposure of the usual serenity of his mind.

"This is unfortunate," he observed, when he had read the official communication, and thrust the enclosure into a pocket of his dressing-gown; "your uncle has left Paris, and left no address, either at his late residence or at the post-office, just as I was expecting a remittance from him for your maintenance."

"Perhaps he will send it from the place he is now staying," Willie observed.

The doctor shook his head.

"I am afraid not," he said; "I believe he has gone away to avoid payment, and I shall have to find him again. Indeed, he travels so much, that I was surprised at his remaining so long in Paris, and when I found that my letter remained unanswered, I wrote to Crafter and Carson, asking them whether they had instructions to pay the money."

"Well?" said Willie, in an inquiring tone, and with an anxious look.

"Their answer, as I feared it would be, was a negative," returned the doctor.

He gathered up his letters, consigned one of them to his desk, and threw the rest into the grate, where he took measures for their immediate and total destruction by striking a match and setting fire to them.

Then he rang the bell for the removal of the breakfast equipage, and took several turns across the apartment in silence.

"I shall leave here to-day, Anderson," he at length said. "There is a through train to Paris about two o'clock."

"Am I to accompany you?" Willie inquired.

"I will let you know by-and-by," he replied.

He paced the room in silence for a short time, now and again knitting his brows, and then he sat down and wrote several letters.

Willie went out for a walk, and did not return until past noon.

Dr. Langton's preparations for his journey were then completed, and a waiter had just brought up the luncheon.

The meal was eaten in silence, Willie being anxious about the future, and expecting the doctor to unfold his plans, while the latter was absorbed in thought concerning matters of which his young companion knew nothing.

"Take this note down to the Circo Price, and

wait for the answer," Dr. Langton said, on the conclusion of the meal.

And he gave Willie a note, the envelope of which was addressed to Senor Alvarez, at the equestrian establishment named by the doctor, which was famous at that time throughout south-western Europe.

At that time, however, the enterprising Price had removed his company and stud, for a season, to Lisbon, and the circus building had been let to a provincial troupe, of which Senor Alvarez was the director.

Willie departed on his errand, and, after waiting some time at the stage-door, was ushered by a liveried page into the presence of Senor Alvarez.

"What is your specialty?" inquired the director, speaking in Spanish, of which language Willie had acquired sufficient knowledge during his residence in Madrid to be able to ask and answer ordinary questions.

"In the profession?" said Willie, who was unprepared for the question, and for the moment was surprised by it.

The circus director nodded an affirmative.

"Tumbling on horseback," said Willie.

"Good," returned Alvarez, rising. "I will see what you can do."

Willie followed him along a dimly-lighted passage, which opened into another, at the end of which they passed through baize-covered swing-doors into the arena.

"Bring a pad-horse, Pedro," said the director to a groom who was raking the sawdust; and the man left the ring, returning in a few minutes with a spotted horse, with a flowing mane and tail.

At a word from Alvarez, accompanied by a crack of a whip, the horse careered around the ring, and Willie, running by its side for a short distance, vaulted to the pad, and at the second course began a series of somersaults and other acrobatic evolutions, rather difficult to execute in ordinary walking costume, and thick soled boots.

"Good!" exclaimed the director, when Willie leaped from the pad. "I will give you twenty-five dollars a month, and you can open at once."

"Agreed," said Willie, who thought it would be a good thing to be independent of Dr. Langton, and inferred from the offer and the fact of the doctor having written to Senor Alvarez that such an arrangement was contemplated by him. "When will you want me to appear?" he asked, as they left the ring.

"Come this evening about nine," returned the director. "One of my company will be unable to appear, and I shall substitute you."

Willie then hurried back to the hotel, having been out longer than he had expected, and learned on his arrival with more surprise than regret that Dr. Langton had left.

Fortunately he had in his possession a little Spanish money, equal to a few shillings sterling, for the doctor had left no money for him, or made any arrangement for his board and lodging at the hotel.

He packed his carpet-bag, therefore, threw an overcoat over his arm, and sallied forth to find a lodging.

This, for a foreigner, without references, was not easy, but he took the liberty of referring the keeper of a *cafe* to Senor Alvarez, and the difficulty was thus surmounted.

Between eight and nine o'clock he proceeded to the circus, where he desired the door-keeper to notify his arrival to the manager, and convey his request for a few minutes' conversation with him.

The page whom he had seen on his first visit brought back an invitation to the manager's room, where he found both that personage and Senor Alvarez, and to them unfolded, in his best Spanish, the position in which he found himself, in not being provided with tights, trunks, and professional shoes.

Alvarez thereupon summoned the page, and desired him to conduct the English youth to the dressing-room, and request Senor Ramoreno to provide him with everything that he required.

Ramoreno, who was a low-browed, lank-haired, bull-necked Spaniard, in a leotard dress and flesh-colored tights, glanced from the page to Willie, and produced from a chest a pair of spangled trunks and a set of tights which fitted the latter as well as if they had been made for him.

The only other members of the company present were three boys, all in acrobatic costume, and pupils of Senor Ramoreno.

While Willie was dressing for his act, and Ramoreno was exchanging his spangles and fleshings for the circus uniform, the manager entered

the dressing-room, followed by a handsome and well-dressed youth, whom he introduced as Senor Percy.

"Percy!" exclaimed Willie, opening his eyes wide with astonishment, and extending his hand to the newcomer.

"Anderson!" exclaimed the latter, grasping it with fervor, while his blue eyes sparkled with pleasure. "Who would have ever thought of our meeting here at the Circo Price, which we have so often talked about, and longed to be engaged at!"

"You know each other?" said the manager. "I am glad to be the means of having united two friends."

Then he hurried away, and Ramoreno, after surveying Percy Bellingham appreciatively, said, with a smile:

"I believe if two circus men were to meet in Pekin or the North Pole, they would recognize each other. I'll bet, now, that you two have performed at the Hippodrome or the Cirque Imperial at Paris?"

"It was at neither place, however, that Senor Percy and I knew each other," observed Willie Anderson. "How long have you left England? And how are the Nobbses and pretty Lettie?" he added, turning to Percy.

"I have come straight here, after starring twelve nights at the Cirque Imperial," replied Percy; "your other question I cannot answer, for I have not seen them since Mason laid up for the winter. Lettie, I believe, is somewhere on the continent, but whether she is with Salmansky in Germany, or with Cinielli in Italy, hang me if I can find out!"

"Now, Anderson!" cried the manager, popping his head into the dressing-room, and immediately disappearing again.

Willie ran along the passage leading to the ring-doors, and, making his first appearance before a Madrid audience with a forward somersault, was received with a burst of applause.

The band struck up, the spotted steed careered around the ring, and in another minute Willie was on the pad, surprising both the manager and the spectators with a series of graceful and well conceived impersonations of classical statuary.

Honored with a recall he turned "flips" all around the ring, and bowed himself out, amidst loud plaudits from all parts of the circus.

On his return to the dressing-room, Ramoreno provided him with a tunic and trousers of dark green, seamed with gold lace, which he put on, and proceeded to the ring-doors.

Percy Bellingham was careering around the ring on the bare back of a black horse, in the character, according to the programme, of the Wild Hunter of the Pampas.

"Oh, the handsome fellow!" said a lady sitting in the stalls, within hearing of the male members of the company, who stood outside the ring-doors. "What a pity that he is a heretic!"

Percy and the black horse were succeeded by a steed of snowy whiteness, with a pad on its back.

Gauzy skirts of an amplitude that made amends for their shortness fluttered to the ring-doors, Willie caught a passing glimpse of a nut-brown face and glossy black hair.

The young lady to whom they belonged was just the sort of girl he had expected a feminine equestrian of a Spanish circus to be, and it was not until she was on the pad, skipping with a wreath of flowers, that he traced a resemblance in her features to those of Lettie Lennard.

"Who is that young lady?" he inquired of Ramoreno in a whisper.

"She is the English girl, Miss Lettie Lennard," the acrobat replied.

When she retired from the ring, Willie followed her quickly along the passage leading to the dressing-rooms.

"Lettie!" he whispered.

The girl turned, quickly, recognized him even in the obscurity of the dimly-lighted passage, and caught both his hands in her own.

"Willie!" she exclaimed, gasping with emotion: "is it really you? Here, too!"

"What a pleasure it is to meet old friends!" said Willie. "How long have you been here? Percy was telling me just now that he did not know where you were."

"Percy Bellingham? Is he here, too?" returned Lettie.

"Opened to-night," said Willie. "Is it not strange I didn't know this morning that I should be here to-night, and didn't know that you were here, or that Percy was expected?"

"What a strange meeting!" said Lettie. "Oh, I am so glad, Willie! I must run away now, but you will see me after the performance, won't you?"

"We will all meet at the stage-door," said

Willie, and then Lettie ran to the ladies' dressing room, and he entered his own to impart the welcome news of her being in the circus to Percy Bellingham.

On the conclusion of the performance the friends exchanged the circus uniform for their own clothes, and hurried to the stage-door, where Lettie and a French girl, who shared her lodgings, were waiting for them.

Percy having shaken hands with Lettie, would have appropriated her to himself, but she took the arm of Willie Anderson, and politeness obliged him to become the escort of Mademoiselle Virginie.

They had much to say to each other about what had happened since last they met.

It could not all be said at once, however; and the story of the doings of Percy and Lettie must be reserved for the next chapter.

CHAPTER V.

A PARTING—THE WANDERER'S RETURN—THE OLD QUARRY HOUSE.

THE close of the tenting season was at hand when Willie Anderson was arrested, and a week or two afterwards the engagements terminated and Mason's company dispersed.

"Well, Lettie, what shall you do?" inquired Percy Bellingham of the pretty equestrienne as they left the tent on the morning after the last performance of the season.

"Oh, I am all right!" returned Lettie. "I am going to Bristol for twelve nights at Hengler's, and I daresay I can get the engagement extended to a month, and then—well, I don't know what then. I wonder how poor Willie Anderson will come off."

"If that old woman would come forward and corroborate his story it would serve him immensely," returned Percy; "but the doctor is in a mess himself, and perhaps the old woman, too. I am sorry for Anderson—very; but I don't see what can be done to help him."

Lettie assented, and wiped an unbidden tear from her dark eyes.

"Shall you go home, Percy, as you talked of doing?" she inquired.

"I think so," he replied, after a little hesitation. "I would rather go to Bristol with you, but I have not the choice, and my mother is very anxious for my return."

"You had better go, then," said Lettie.

"There will be a scene, I know," observed Percy, with a shrug. "The governor will storm, and the *mater* will go into hysterics, and I shall wish myself anywhere else. My sister is the only sensible member of the family."

"Except yourself, of course," said Lettie, with a smile.

"Oh, I didn't count myself as one of them," returned Percy. "I am an outcast, you know—a prodigal son."

"Then you will go down to-day, I suppose?" said Lettie.

"I suppose so," returned Percy, with a rueful look. "You will let me write to you, Lettie?"

"If you will write sensibly," the girl replied, after a moment's hesitation.

Then she extended her hand and bade him good-by.

"*Aurevoir*," returned Percy, with a gentle pressure of the hand which he held in his own. "We shall meet again, Lettie. Don't be surprised if it is in the ring of some circus."

Then they parted, and he sauntered in an undecided manner toward the railway station, where he consulted the time-table and then glanced at his watch.

There was a down train due in half an hour, so he bought a newspaper to while away the time, and took a ticket for the town near which his home was situated.

Two hours afterward he stood within the grounds of the old Quarry House, sauntering among the trees and looking toward the house at intervals, yet hesitating to approach it nearer.

We will leave him there for a few minutes while we take a look at the inmates of the old red mansion, which, we may observe in passing, took its name from a disused sandstone quarry on the estate, and not very far from the house.

Mrs. Bellingham, a middle-aged lady, thin, sallow-complexioned, dark-haired, reclined upon a couch, with a perfumed cambric handkerchief in one hand, and a gold-mounted toilet bottle of essential salts in the other.

Nellie, the young lady whom Willie Anderson had seen when he accompanied Percy Bellingham on the occasion of the latter's secret visit to the house, was sitting at the table reading, but looking toward the window from time to time

as if a very small matter would attract her attention from the book.

"What tiresome weather!" she observed on one of these occasions. "Too wet for riding one day, and too dirty for walking the next; too cold for driving, and not cold enough to freeze the pond hard enough for skating."

"You surely do not want to be always in motion," said her mother. "You have books enough, I am sure, and your drawing and music, besides needlework, which, when I was a girl, was thought almost sufficient of itself."

The young lady made a grimace unobserved by her mother, but she did not care to provoke a lecture by a word of rejoinder.

"What can that fellow be after among the trees yonder?" said Mr. Bellingham, a stout, red-faced gentleman, who stood at the bay window looking across the park.

Nellie sprang from her chair, and ran to the window.

"Where, papa?" she exclaimed. "Oh, I see! Shall I run over and ask who he is, and what he wants?"

"You?" returned her father. "What can you be thinking of, child?"

"I believe the girl is taking leave of her senses," observed her mother. "She will be wanting to take a gun and go out at night to look for poachers next."

"Not I, mama," said Nellie, looking intently towards the belt of trees across the park. "So far as I am concerned, poor men are as welcome to a hare or a rabbit as the birds to a few currants and cherries."

"You shock me, Ellen," exclaimed her father, reprovingly. "Would you encourage dishonesty?"

"About the youth, yonder, papa," said Nellie, disregarding the question. "Shall I tell you my private opinion about him?"

"You are too young, Ellen, to have opinions," said her father, leaving the window. "I will go out to that fellow myself. I won't have any strangers prowling about my grounds."

Putting her handkerchief to her mouth to suppress a violent inclination to laugh, Nellie remained at the window to watch the result of her father's interference with the prowling of the young gentleman in the distance.

She looked interested, and she did not evince any surprise when she saw the prowler come towards the house on the approach of Mr. Bellingham.

"Who do you think it is, mama?" she inquired, when she saw her father returning to the house, with the young gentleman walking by his side.

"How is it possible that I can guess?" returned her mother. "Do you suppose that I know all the ne'er-do-wells of the neighborhood?"

"But he is not one of that class, mama," said Nellie, with a smile.

"Then I suppose your papa was mistaken," observed the elder lady. "His sight is not so good as it used to be, I fancy."

"Guess who it is," said Nellie, leaving the window.

"Do not be so absurd, Ellen," returned her mother. "Guessing is only for children."

Nellie thereupon ran off, returning in a few moments with her blue eyes sparkling with joy, followed by her father and her brother.

"It is Percy, mama," she exclaimed.

"Percy?" echoed her mother. "Oh!" and then she fainted.

"You should have prepared her for this surprise," said Mr. Bellingham. "You see, sir, what a shock you have given to the sensitive nerves of your mother."

"I did try to break it to her," said Nellie, holding the pungent salts close to her mother's nostrils, with the effect of producing a speedy return of consciousness; "but mama will never guess anything, or take a hint of anything."

"Oh, Percy!" gasped Mrs. Bellingham; and then, as the young wanderer approached the couch and kissed her, she burst into tears.

Percy was resolved to say as little as possible until he was restored in some degree to the parental favor, so he sat down near the couch in silence.

"Now, sir," said his father, sternly, "give an account of yourself. What do you mean by this undutiful and disgraceful conduct?"

"I have done nothing disgraceful," replied Percy, coloring at the imputation.

"What!" cried his father, "nothing disgraceful? Are you so lost, then, as not to understand the word? Is there nothing disgraceful in wandering about the country with a set of disreputable strollers and mountebanks?"

"There may be, in the way you put it," replied Percy; "but I have not been associating

disreputable persons of any kind, and certainly not mountebanking."

"Perhaps you will have the goodness to tell us what you have been doing?" returned his father.

"I have been performing in a circus," he replied.

"Well, sir?" exclaimed his father, as if seeking for a further explanation.

"Wandering about is a very indefinite charge, which might be made against persons traveling for pleasure," said Percy. "In that sense I have been wandering about the country, but not mountebanking, which is derived from *monte banco*, mounting a bench; and the epithet 'disreputable' could not fairly be applied to any of the ladies and gentlemen of Mr. Mason's company."

"Ladies and gentlemen!" gasped his mother. "Are they not low, strolling vagabonds?"

"Liable to be committed to jail for a month with hard labor?" added his father.

"I defer to your superior knowledge of the Vagrant Act, papa," said Percy; "but no magistrate would, at the present day, think of putting it into force against the performers in a circus. What is the difference between an entertainment in a tent and one in a theater?"

"But do not the riders and tumblers sleep in the tent with the horses?" said Mrs. Bellingham.

"My dear mamma," replied Percy, with a vain effort to repress a smile, "do visit the next circus that comes this way, and I will introduce you to the manager, and show you the dressing-rooms and the stables."

"Not for the world!" said his mother, holding up her hands. "Where can the boy have imbibed such low tastes and such strange ideas?"

"I will take care that he does not indulge the one, or express the other, in future," said Mr. Bellingham.

He turned away as he spoke, or he might have observed on Percy's countenance an expression that showed that any harsh exercise of parental authority would be like fastening the safety-valve of a steam engine.

"Do I look like a vagrant, mama?" Percy asked a moment afterwards, smiling as he spoke.

Mrs. Bellingham could find nothing objectionable in the dark overcoat, with fur collar and cuffs, which he had just taken off, nor in the black suit which he wore.

So she remained silent.

Percy took an early opportunity of leaving the room, and being immediately joined by Nellie, they sat down in a bay of the drawing-room.

"Now, young runaway," said his sister, "you have got to tell me all your adventures since you have been away, 'wandering about the country with strollers and mountebanks.'"

"And add to my offense by infecting you with my low tastes and strange ideas," returned Percy; "I think I had better not tell you anything."

"Is it such a jolly life?" said Nellie; "I should think it must be to have such an attraction for you. Were there any pretty girls in the company?"

"There was one," he replied.

"Did you fall in love with her?" his sister inquired. "Was that one of the attractions of the circus?"

"I like her," replied Percy; "but she is so pretty that everybody wants her."

"But about the life," said Nellie; "tell me all about it."

"Well, you see, Nellie, there are two kinds of circuses. There are some that occupy a permanent building for three months at a stretch, as at Astley's, for instance; and there are others that move from town to town from Easter to the end of October. It was one of that sort I was with, and the performances are, in such cases, given in a tent, which can be pitched in a few hours."

"Did you have to help to pitch the tent, and look after the horses?" his sister inquired.

"Bless you, no!" he replied. "There is a gang of tentmen for the one purpose, and grooms for the other. The company have nothing to do till one o'clock, when they mount for the parade; then comes the afternoon performance, and then another in the evening. As soon as that is over, the tentmen begin to pull down and pack up; and the next day we open in another town."

"Then you are always on the move?" said his sister. "How delightful! That's just what I should like."

"I say, don't let the *mater* hear that," said Percy.

"Oh, no!" returned Nellie; "but I should like

CHAPTER VI.

BELLINGHAM'S CIRCUS IN THE OLD QUARRY—
SUDDEN DISPERSION OF THE SPECTATORS—
PERCY TAKES FLIGHT AGAIN.

PERCY BELLINGHAM found the means of passing the winter with tolerable pleasantness, and in the society of Nellie he compensated himself for his enforced silence concerning everything connected with circuses in the hearing of their parents.

The squire allowed him a horse, and there was a pack of foxhounds at a little distance, good shooting on the estate, and a large sheet of water for skating when the ice was thick enough.

With the spring came the necessity for devising other means of recreation, and also thoughts of the tenting season.

Nellie had been very anxious to see Percy execute the equestrian feats which he had performed in the arena of Mason's circus, and his passion for the ring prompted him to make an attempt to gratify both his sister and himself by their exhibition.

With this view he visited the old quarry, which was on the borders of a wood, and entered by an incline, which had formerly been used by the quarrymen and the carters employed in removing the sandstone blocks to the yards of masons and builders.

The excavations was large enough for his contemplated purpose, and tolerably level at the bottom; and with the assistance of one of the laborers employed on the estate, a ring was made.

Then the groom was taken into his confidence, and his horse was taken to the quarry every day, first to be trained to run in the ring, and afterwards for practice with Percy standing on his back, and the groom acting as ring-master.

On the day which Percy had fixed for the first performance, advantage being taken for that purpose of the squire's absence from home, he walked to the neighboring town to procure some pink note-paper for his programmes; and as he was leaving it, he saw a small crowd on the road before a public house.

Pushing into the throng, he saw a lad in dirty tights, and worn trunks which had lost many of the spangles that had once adorned them, performing acrobatic feats on a small square of threadbare carpet.

As the young stroller returned to the perpendicular, after a series of rapidly executed flips, he recognized Devilshoof.

He made no sign, however, and the acrobat, though he opened his eyes widely, when Percy dropped a sixpence into his cap, failed to recognize him.

He remained near the spot while Devilshoof collected the largesses of the crowd, which began to disperse as soon as the young acrobat put on a ragged and threadbare overcoat, and picked up his bit of carpet.

"What's the nob, bully?" said Percy, following the lad as he walked away.

"It's never you, Bellingham!" exclaimed Devilshoof, turning about quickly in his surprise at being accosted in the slang of the circus, and opening his eyes almost as widely as when he received Percy's unexpectedly large addition to the "nob."

"I don't look much like the ghost of myself, do I?" returned Percy, with a smile.

"Not half so much as I do, I reckon," said Devilshoof.

And Percy, looking at him again, saw that his face was pinched and thin, and in conjunction with his fattered garb, told a story of hard times.

"Why, what has been the matter with you, Cupid?" he inquired.

And as he said the words a thought flashed through Percy's mind that he could make Cupid very useful to him.

"I am suffering from a bad attack of short commons, consequent upon a low state of the finances," replied the acrobat, "that's what's the matter. Nothing to eat since last night but a penn'orth of bread and no butter; that's what's the matter, and the collection never more than fourpence a day till this blessed morning, when it arose to ninepence through the generosity of a kind-hearted young fellow who dropped me a tanner."

"But what made you take to pitching?" Percy inquired, as they walked on towards Deadman's Corner.

"Well, this is how it was," replied Devilshoof; "the pantomime at the Pantheon, where I was sprite, didn't run so long as was expected, and so I was thrown out, too late for an engagement at Astley's or the Amphi, and too early for the tenting season. So I started pitching, and a hard time I've had of it, I can tell you."

The thought here came into Percy's mind that he could befriend Devilshoof, and give increased *eclat* to his entertainment in the quarry, by retaining him for an acrobatic act, and making a collection for his benefit on the conclusion of the performance.

This plan he unfolded to the lad as they went along, and on reaching the Old Quarry House he took him to the stables and procured for him from the cook a liberal supply of cold meat and bread and a mug of ale.

Nellie had not been informed as yet of the intended performances in the quarry, and her blue eyes opened widely with surprise when Percy slipped into her hand at luncheon time a manuscript programme on perfumed rose-colored paper, of which the following is a copy:

THIS DAY!

BELLINGHAM'S CIRCUS,

HANGMAN'S HILL QUARRY.

Bare-back riding by Mr. Percy Bellingham.

Somersaults on horseback by M. Cupid.

Performance to commence at two o'clock.

No charge for admission, but a collection will be made for the benefit of M. Cupid.

Copies of this announcement were forwarded to the younger members of the farmers' families in the neighborhood, and distributed in the kitchen, stables, and lodges of the Old Quarry House.

The old quarry itself where the show was to take place, had been specially decked for the occasion.

The temporary ring where the horse had been trained was barricaded around by the village carpenter, who had on hand a lot of posts and rails covered with baize, that in the previous summer had done duty at the local flower-show.

The trunk of an old tree occupied the center of the ring, and was a good substitute for a tent pole; tarpaulins and horse-cloths had been hung over the roughest parts of the quarry walls, thus heightening the idea of a tent.

It is true there was no money taken and no band, but the audience could dispense with such luxuries.

The day being bright and fine for the season, twenty or thirty persons were, in consequence, assembled around the quarry, when Percy and Devilshoof, both in acrobatic costume, entered it, followed by Bob, the groom, leading the trained horse.

Amidst a flattering amount of clapping of hands and waving of handkerchiefs, Percy vaulted to the back of the horse, and bowed to all sides of the ring.

"Ladies and gentlemen," he then said, "in inviting your attention to a little riding and tumbling, I must apologize for many deficiencies, which I am sure your good nature will excuse. Our stud of a hundred and fifty horses, seven elephants, and six camels, with the circus wardrobe and properties, have not arrived, having been unexpectedly delayed to give a final performance before his Imperial Majesty the Emperor of Cariboo."

Shouts of laughter, and cries of: "We'll excuse you!" followed this address, and Percy, with a chirrup to the horse, commenced his career.

Bob the groom, in a green tunic, white cords, and top-boots, made a capital ring-master.

Having displayed his agility in jumping on and off the horse at full speed, Percy paused, while Bob and Devilshoof stretched a rope across the ring, and then resumed his career, leaping over the rope every time the horse passed under it, and alighting upon the animal's back.

Then he leaped off, and was succeeded by Devilshoof, who first made an attempt to supply the absence of a clown by pretending to stumble over a chip of sandstone, and then carefully removing the obstruction to the outside of the ring.

In his first career, the acrobat gave a series of impersonations of statuary, such as Ajax defying the lightning, the athlete throwing the discus, the dying gladiator, etc.

But these, though not badly posed, did not elicit so much applause as the horsemanship of young Bellingham.

"Bravo, Master Cupid!" exclaimed Percy, bringing the horse to a pause with a sign. "Do you know why he is called Cupid, Mr. Master?"

"No, sir, I don't," the groom replied.

"Because he is so pretty," said Percy.

And a roar of laughter all around rewarded his attempt to be funny.

"You don't seem very good at guessing riddles," he added.

"Well, sir, there are some I can guess and

some I can't," returned Bob. "I am like the softy who was asked by the miller whether he wasn't a fool. 'Well,' he says, 'there's some things I know, and some I doesn't know.'"

"Ah, I see," said Percy. "And what did the miller say to that?"

"The miller asked the softy what he did know, and he said he knew that millers kept fat hogs."

"Very good," said Percy. "And what was it he didn't know?"

"The miller asked him that, and he said he didn't know whose meal the hogs ate."

There was another roar at this, and then Bob, at a sign from Percy, cracked his whip, and, as the horse resumed his career, Devilshoof sprang to his feet, and executed a series of somersaults amidst continued plaudits.

Percy then produced a saucepan lid, which he had borrowed from the cook for the purpose, and walked around the circle, collecting the gifts of the spectators.

He had just completed the round, and added to the sum collected his own contribution of half a crown, when his father's voice, in loud, harsh tones, struck upon his ears, and caused everyone to start, surprising as it did even those who had no cause to fear his anger.

"What tomfoolery is this?" demanded the squire, in a blustering manner.

Nellie ran off, followed by Charlotte and the rest of the audience, and Percy hastily thrust the money he had collected into the hands of Devilshoof, who had just wound up the performance with "flips" around the ring.

"Away with you," said Percy, in a hasty whisper. "It is the governor."

"What does this mean, I say?" exclaimed the squire, stamping his foot, and glaring from Percy to the groom, and from Bob to Devilshoof. "Circus-riding upon my property, without leave or license; making a disreputable vagrant of my horse, too!"

Bob led off the animal in great haste.

"You will leave my service this day month, Bob Shorter!" shouted his master.

"I hope you will not punish Bob for my fault," said Percy. "He has only taken part in a harmless frolic to please me, and at my request."

"And if that young scamp doesn't get out of the parish in an hour, he shall have a taste of prison discipline for the correction of his morals," added the squire, indicating Devilshoof, who was putting on his ragged overcoat, and certainly, in his dirty tights, did not present a very reputable appearance.

"What a fierce old buffer he is," said he, in a whisper to Percy. "Thanks for the nob, and I hope we shall meet again under more agreeable circumstances."

"What!" cried the squire, with a fresh outburst of rage, as he picked up a programme which had been dropped by a spectator in the stampede that followed his unexpected appearance. "Bellingham's Circus? You have disgraced my name to that extent! You degenerate young scoundrel, return to the house this instant, and to-morrow off you go to school again—to a German College, you disgraceful boy."

Percy's face reddened, but he made no reply, and obeyed the paternal mandate by walking quickly towards the house.

Devilshoof, who had just reached the level on which the squire stood, but on the opposite side of the quarry, turned around at that moment, and could not resist the temptation he felt to insult the irate old gentleman by performing the pantomimic action which passes among boys for the freemason's sign, otherwise "taking a sight."

"You young rascal!" roared the squire, and the next moment his burly form was crashing through the brambles and brakes in pursuit of the daring offender.

Devilshoof was much too nimble to be caught by a stout and not very active pursuer, and the squire, finding that he might as well attempt to outrun a rabbit, gave up the chase, and returned to the house panting and growling, and with a red and flustered face.

"Where is Percy?" he inquired, as he entered the drawing-room, where his wife, as usual, was reclining on the couch.

"I have not seen him for some time," she replied. "What has happened?"

"Rebellion—disgrace!" he exclaimed. "The young scapegrace has set up an amateur circus in the old quarry, with a young vagabond in dirty tights, and Bob, and one of my horses. Look there!" flinging the programme on the table. "I'll circus him, the young scamp!"

Percy was not in the house, nor did he present himself during the remainder of the day.

When the family were retiring, Ellen was informed by Charlotte that her brother had gone

up to his chamber, and this being communicated by the young lady to her parents, the squire took the precaution of turning the key of Percy's room to guard against his evasion before daybreak.

Percy, who was already in bed, put his head under the clothes to smother his laughter as he heard the key turn.

There was lying upon the dressing-table the following note, the ink of which was scarcely dry:

"MY DEAR MAMA.—Papa has threatened to send me to-morrow to a German college. I prefer a circus, and sorry as I am to grieve you, I shall leave here at daybreak. With love to yourself and Nellie, I am, my dear mother, your undutiful son,
PERCY."

The grey light that precedes sunrise was stealing into the chamber when he awoke on the following morning, and he arose at once and prepared for his flight.

Having dressed and packed his carpet-bag, he took from under his pillow a screw driver, which he had secreted before retiring to rest, and in a few minutes had removed the lock from the door, thus rendering the squire's precaution unavailing.

Carrying his boots in his hand, he crept down the stairs noiselessly, put on his boots quietly, unfastened the door, and walked quickly across the grounds.

Three hours later he was at Sevenoaks, where he breakfasted, proceeding thus to the metropolis by rail.

Arrived in London, he made inquiries of the agents, and obtained through one of them an engagement for twelve nights at the Cirque Imperial, as the reader already knows.

CHAPTER VII.

A CIRCUS ON THE RAILS—ATTACKED BY REBELS —DISPERSION OF THE COMPANY.

ON the expiration of the term for which he had engaged the Circo Price, Senor Alvarez had made arrangements for a series of performances at Saragossa, to which historically famous town the company and stud travelled by rail.

More than half the distance had been run, and the train was rushing through a cutting on the eastern slope of the mountains that overlook the valley of the Ebro, when the speed slackened suddenly without any premonitory whistle, and presently came to a stand.

"Halloo!" exclaimed Percy Bellingham, looking from the window; "what are we stopping for? I say, Gomez, what game is this?"

The question was put to a young Spaniard, a clever trapezist, and was occasioned by the appearance of some thirty or forty armed men, who had caused the stoppage of the train by presenting their muskets at the driver, and were now opening the doors of the carriages.

Gomez looked out, and drew in his head with a shrug.

"Brigands!" he exclaimed.

"Carlists, more likely," observed another Spaniard. "There are too many of them for brigands, and they are too well armed, though certainly as ill-looking a set of ruffians as ever plundered her Catholic majesty's subjects."

"Mercy, save us!" exclaimed a little Frenchwoman, a tight-rope artist. "Will they harm us?"

"I don't suppose they will take the trouble to cut our throats, if that is what you mean," said Gomez, with another shrug; "but they will take the horses, and where shall we be then?"

Percy Bellingham and Willie Anderson looked out from opposite sides of the carriage, and saw some of the assailants dragging the horses from their boxes, and others presenting their muskets at the passengers, between whom and themselves a large amount of swearing and gesticulating was going on.

Presently three or four shots were fired in rapid succession, and Lettie and the Frenchwoman screamed.

"We are in for it now!" exclaimed Gomez.

"It is Alvarez!" cried Willie Anderson; "they have dragged him out of the carriage, and are stabbing him with their bayonets."

"That comes of having a hot temper and a loaded revolver," observed Percy.

"Ah, they have done for him!" said Willie. "He does not move as he lies between the rails."

A black-bearded, brown-faced ruffian, who wore a soldier's accoutrements over the garb of a Basque peasant, now approached the carriage on Percy's side, and demanded their money, and an equally unprepossessing subject of Isabella

II. appeared on the other side with a similar requisition.

"There is no help for it," said Willie Anderson, as he produced his slenderly-lined purse; "so we may as well comply with a good grace."

"Who steals my purse, steals trash," observed Percy, as he followed Willie's example, and handed the Carlist a very light *porte-monnaie*. "There is not much in it."

Gomez and his countryman, Lettie, and the Frenchwoman, had also to comply with the peremptory demand of the rebels, whose red caps showed them to be followers of the Count de Montemolino, a pretender to the Spanish crown, and then the fellows went on to the next carriage.

While this scene of murder and robbery was being enacted, the engine-driver and the fireman remained at their posts, and the guard sat in his brake-van calmly smoking a cigarette, while the Carlists ransacked the boxes and parcels in his charge.

When all the spoil had been collected, the band drove the horses along the line in the opposite direction to that in which the train had to proceed, and soon disappeared.

A couple of grooms then lifted the corpse of Senor Alvarez into an empty horse-box, the guard blew his whistle, and the train sped on again.

"This is pleasant," said Willie Anderson, ironically; "I suppose we may as well go on to Saragossa, but what we are to do there, I don't know."

Gomez shrugged his shoulders, and the two women, though relieved from their fears, looked anxious.

"I wish them joy of their acquisitions," observed Percy, with a smile that had a spice of malice in it; "I should like to see one of their officers on Miranda, and she persisting in running in a circle, when he was leading an attack."

In spite of the prospective troubles that were drawing upon the minds of all the company, Willie Anderson and the Frenchwoman could not forbear laughing.

"It is too bad for us to be laughing, while our poor director lies dead," observed Madame Tournaire, as a sigh succeeded to the laugh.

"It is no laughing matter," added Willie, his countenance becoming grave again.

There was little more said until the train reached Saragossa, when the passengers connected with the circus lingered on the platform under the influence of a common sense of helplessness in the face of an unexpected misfortune.

"Let us hear what old Rocambelli has to say," said Willie, and his companions followed him at once in quest of the man named, who was an elderly Italian, who had performed in circuses from his childhood, and now made a very good clown of the continental type.

Rocambelli was already the center of a group of men and women, equestrians, acrobats, gymnasts, balancers and the like, all of whom were listening, with anxious faces, to the old man's counsels.

He was a stout, smooth-faced, olive-complexioned man, and wore a high-crowned felt hat, and a cloak of voluminous folds.

"You see, my children," said he, spreading out his hands, and speaking in measured and solemn tones, "we have lost both the horses and our money. If we had the horses, we might wait for the money; but without the animals we should be like starving steeds, waiting for the growing of the grass."

"Could we not manage for a night or two without horses, Signor Rocambelli?" inquired Gomez.

"And then?" said the Italian.

"Perhaps the horses will be recovered," suggested Madame Tournaire, in default of a reply from the Spaniard.

"No chance of that," observed Carambosa, the character rider, with a shrug.

"You hear what your countryman says?" said Rocambelli, looking intently at Gomez.

"No, my children," he continued, turning to the others. "There is nothing to be done here, even if the defunct Alvarez was among us, without the horses. What, then, do I advise? I will tell you, my children. Let us separate, and endeavor to procure new engagements."

His listeners looked at each other with grave countenances.

They had hoped for the opening of some bright prospect from the Italian.

"What are we to do without money?" inquired Carambosa. "I propose that we give a performance at the circo, and share the receipts in the rate of our salaries."

This proposition found favor with the majority, and as all were alike penniless, they moved

towards the circo, which had been advertised to open that evening.

The ring-master had an interview with the proprietor of the building while Gomez examined the gymnastic apparatus, and then they adjourned to the *cafes* to partake of the much needed refreshments, which a small advance from the proprietor enabled them to procure.

A new programme was hastily sketched out by Salamanca, and copies of it stuck up in the dressing-rooms.

Then the gas was lighted in the arena, and one after another crept down to the ring-doors, returning with the news that the circus was filling fast.

At last the crucial moment arrived when the performance should have commenced with an *entree* of a dozen cavaliers and ladies in costumes of the reign of Charles V.

Salamanca entered, looking very grave, and made a profound bow to all parts of the circus.

"Ladies and gentlemen," said he, "it is with deep and heartfelt regret that I have to announce to you the unfortunate circumstance that obliges the company to throw themselves upon your kind indulgence. Owing to an accident on the railway, the arrival of the stud has been delayed, and there is not at the present moment a horse in the stables."

Murmurs of discontent became audible at this announcement.

"All the company are here, however, and will do their best to entertain you," added the ring-master.

The murmurs growing louder, and several persons demanding that their money should be returned, he gave a signal to the band, which struck up immediately, and Ramoreno and his boys bounded into the ring, glistening with spangles.

Plaudits were heard mingled with the murmurs of the disappointed, and as all the performers exerted themselves to the utmost, the entertainment was brought to a close more agreeably than could have been anticipated.

It was obvious to all, however, that the experiment was one that could not be repeated, and it was resolved on the following morning, at a meeting held in the circo, to adopt the advice of Signor Rocambelli, and disperse.

"Ah!" ejaculated the Italian, rubbing his hands, "you see, then, that my advice was good. You have come around to my opinion."

"Ah," returned Carambosa, "but we shall not disperse now without a dollar or two in our pockets."

On leaving the circo the company broke up into groups, which proceeded in different directions.

Our two English youths and their pretty little friend resolved upon traveling in an easterly direction, with the ulterior aim of reaching Paris.

Behold them, therefore, walking out of Saragossa, each carrying a light heart, though only a few dollars were in the purse of each.

"Now what are we to do?" Percy asked, addressing both his companions in misfortune. "We have started on this track because we all want to get to Paris, and this is the road there. But from here to Paris is a long journey, and unless we can pick up a horse, I am afraid that most of the burden will fall upon the shoulders of one of us."

"Meaning Willie," returned Lettie, whose charming face wore a grave expression. "That is what I am thinking of."

"Then don't think of it any longer," said Willie, cheerfully. "Perhaps we can hire a horse to mount you and Percy, and even if we can't, you can sing and dance, and Percy can beat the drum. We will make a music-hall performance of it."

"Where is the drum?" inquired Percy.

"Oh, we will hire one," returned Willie, with a happy disposition to make the best of the situation. "Or perhaps we can enlist a trio of gipsy musicians in our troupe. There are a lot of those *gitanos* knocking about at the fairs in this country, I have heard."

"And I have heard that they are too handy with their knives to be pleasant companions," observed Percy. "Besides, they work only with their own people, I fancy."

"Well, what do you think about it?" inquired Willie. "You are not thinking of turning back, I hope?"

"Not I," exclaimed Percy, who saw that both his companions regarded him with anxious countenances. "I am only thinking how we can go on and keep together with the greatest advantage to all of us, and without all the work falling to your share."

"Oh, never mind that, cully," returned Willie.

"Have you anything to propose?" Lettie inquired, turning to Percy.

"I may have, presently," said he. "The idea is maturing in my mind, and when it is ripe, I will unfold it for your approval."

About six miles from Saragossa, in a northeasterly direction, they came to a village in the center of the straggling street of which about a dozen peasants, vine-dressers, muleteers, and others were sitting on benches in front of the vine-house, eating their midday meal of bread and cheese, flavored with garlic, and drinking the light wine of the country.

"Shall we do a pitch here?" inquired Willie.

"Bother pitching," replied Percy. "What sort of a mob should we gather here, do you think? We will rest here awhile, if you like. I daresay Lettie is tired."

His companions assenting, they sat down at a vacant table, and having been supplied with such refreshments as the house afforded, listened attentively to Percy's exposition of a brilliant idea which had been conceived and matured in his mind during the last few minutes.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE FRENCHMAN AND HIS PERFORMING PONY—A MUSIC-HALL ENTERTAINMENT IN A BULL-RING—THE STOLEN HORSES—SUSPICIOUS CHARACTERS.

THE village at which our wanderers had halted for rest and refreshment was about a mile behind them, and they were descending a rather steep hill when they overtook a group of itinerating professionals, consisting of a couple of bipeds and a quadruped.

The latter, by no means an unimportant member of the company, was a gaily caparisoned brown pony, and the animal was led by an elderly man, with a grave and intelligent-looking countenance, the bronzed hue of which contrasted sharply with a thick white mustache.

He wore a grey frock of semi-military cut, trimmed with black braid, and black trousers with red stripes down the outer seams.

The third member of the company was a little brown-faced Spaniard, wearing the ordinary peasant's garb, though that of a more southern region than they were now traveling through, and carrying a drum at his back.

"Fortune favors us," observed Percy Bellingham to his companions, as they came near enough to take note of the wayfarers before them. "Here is our drum, and an addition to our talent."

"My idea, cully," said Willie, with a smile.

"I acknowledge that it was suggested by your idea of a music-hall entertainment," returned Percy. "But it was I who conceived the plan for carrying it out; you will acknowledge to that?"

"All right," returned the good-tempered Willie.

"I will speak to this old buffer," said Percy. "He looks like a Frenchman. Good-day, monsieur!"

He addressed the old man in French, at the same time lifting his hat.

"Your servant, monsieur," responded the leader of the pony, returning the salute, and glancing from Percy to his companions as he spoke.

"Clever pony," said Percy, with a glance at the intelligent-looking animal, who was examining the additions to the party with the discriminating eye of an equine critic of mankind.

The Frenchman nodded assent.

"Are you going to perform in the next town?" Percy inquired.

"The pony will perform there," was the modest response of the old man. "He is the staff of my life, and earns enough for Domenico and I as well as for himself."

"We, also, are entertainers of the public," said Percy. "We belonged, till yesterday, to the Alvarez Troupe, lately performing at the Circo Price, but our director was killed yesterday on the railway, and the horses stolen by his murderers, a band of Carlists. That misfortune broke up the company, and we three, being old friends, and all English, are working our way to Paris."

"Pitching?" said the Frenchman.

"We are not reduced to that yet," returned Percy. "Our plan is to apply for permission to use the bull-ring at the next town, and give a mixed entertainment. Would you like to join us?"

"I shall be most happy," replied the Frenchman.

"You and your pony will be valuable acquisitions," said Percy, "to say nothing of the drum, which will be most useful for our parade, and in lieu of a band."

The division of the expected receipts was satisfactorily arranged, and Percy then communicated to his companions all that had passed between himself and the Frenchman, whose language neither of them understood.

On arriving at the next town, Willie Anderson and the Frenchman were deputed, as speaking better Spanish than their companions, to wait upon the mayor, and ask his permission to use the bull-ring for their performance.

Willie was the spokesman, his companion aiding him with a French equivalent, and sometimes with a Spanish word, when his own vocabulary of the latter language became insufficient for the purpose of explaining the unfortunate position in which they had been placed by the murder of Senor Alvarez, and the loss of the horses.

"It is all right," he joyfully announced, on their return to the *cafe*, at which they had left their companions. "We are to have the bull-ring for one evening. Now, Bellingham, draw up the best programme you can, while Domenico and I go around the town, and announce the performance by beat of drum. Ask Frenchy to go with us; it will look better, as he is so much older. He will pass for the director of the entertainment."

Percy made the request suggested, accompanying it with a compliment to the veteran's dignified appearance, at which the Frenchman bowed with a grave smile, and then the trio set out upon their perambulation.

"Beat up, Domenico," said the old man, when they arrived at the corner of the street, and the little Spaniard beat the drum until a small mob of loungers and brown-faced children gathered around them, and the shopkeepers left their counters to learn the cause of the stir.

"Just arrived!" shouted Willie, in his best Spanish; "and will perform this evening in the bull-ring, by kind permission of the mayor, the surviving members of the circus company of Senor Alvarez, lately performing at the Circo Price, in Madrid. The company includes Mr. Rochez and his wonderful performing pony; Mr. Percy Bellingham, the famous English bare-backed rider; Mademoiselle Lennard, the most graceful equestrienne of the day; and Mr. Anderson, the famous acrobat, vaulter and impersonator of the Grecian statues. Admission free!—but a collection will be made between the first and second parts of the entertainment, for the benefit of the sufferers by the Carlist attack on the train between Madrid and Saragossa."

This announcement was repeated at intervals as they went through all the streets of the town, and they had the satisfaction, on going to the bull-ring, to find the seats rapidly filling.

Domenico beat his drum until the spectators began to manifest signs of impatience, when the old Frenchman advanced to the center of the ring and gave a graphic account of the stopping of the train, the murder of Senor Alvarez, and the plundering of the passengers.

Some disappointment appeared to be felt by the spectators, when they found that the programme included no equestrian performances, but the Spaniards are passionately fond of acrobatic and gymnastic feats, and Willie's somersaults and flips elicited their warmest plaudits.

Then Lettie sang the *vivandier's* song in "The Daughter of the Regiment," with drum accompaniment by Domenico, after which the Frenchman introduced his pony, who proved to be a very clever and most diverting little animal.

While the little Spaniard beat a march upon his drum, the company went around with the hat, and were tolerably successful in the extraction of small coins from the spectators.

Then Percy and Lettie danced a minuet, and sang the duet of Manrico and Leonora, in "Il Trovatore."

Willie gave his impersonations of classical statuary, an orange chest serving for a pedestal, and the entertainment concluded.

The distance to the next town being greater than could be accomplished in one day, in the absence of other means of locomotion than those which nature had provided them, they halted at a village about midway, where an outdoor performance was given by Willie Anderson and the Frenchman's performing pony.

Rochez was attending to the wants of that interesting animal, while Percy, Willie and Lettie sat around a table, talking of the past and the future, and Domenico was stretched upon a bench, smoking a cigarette, when a sudden reverberation, as of distant thunder, startled every one in the little inn.

"Can that be thunder?" said Willie.

"It is early for thunder," returned Percy; "and the sky is perfectly clear," he added, looking towards the road.

Again the sound boomed along the horizon. Willie and Percy looked at each other, and then went out, followed by Lettie.

"It sounds like distant rifle firing," observed Willie.

The continued repetition of the sounds dispelled the idea of a thunderstorm, however, and convinced the listeners that they were the reports of rifle volleys.

"Holy Virgin, the red-caps are coming!" exclaimed the hostess in intense alarm.

The woman who made that outcry had joined them at the door, and now ran into the house to conceal her money and her silver spoons in a mattress, and drive her poultry into the fields.

"I hope the Montemolinists will get it hot for stealing our horses," observed Percy.

For nearly half an hour the signs of conflict were confined to those distant reverberations, an intervening hill screening from their sight the scene of the encounter.

Then an incessant discharge of single rifles showed that one of the contending parties was endeavoring to dislodge the other from its position by advancing skirmishers.

Presently the reports sounded nearer, and wreaths of white smoke began to curl over the hill, and roll towards the watchers.

"Shall we be safe here?" said Lettie, laying her hand on Willie's arm.

"As safe here as anywhere we can get to," was his not very consoling reply. "If the tide of battle rolls this way, as it seems likely to do, it will not stop here, and we shall be in equal danger whether we return or remain here."

In a few minutes small bodies of men were seen on the slope of the hill, over which the smoke now rolled in dense volumes.

The firing continued, and the retreating forces were seen to face about and return the fire of the assailants, but whether the former wore red caps or white could not be seen.

Then small parties of cavalry mingled with the infantry, and the whole rushed down the hill, others emerging every moment from the cloud of smoke.

"It is the fellows who plundered us that are flying," said Percy, as the foremost of the retreating force came near enough to be distinguished. "Serves them right."

"Here is Miranda. I would swear to her!" exclaimed Willie, as a riderless steed came galloping down the road.

He rushed into the road, caught the flying horse by the bridle, and led her into the stable-yard of the inn, patting her neck, and calling her by name.

Percy withdrew into the inn with Lettie, and the host, muttering many profane objurgations, and mingled with invocations of his favorite saints, proceeded to secure the doors.

From the windows they beheld the routed Montemolinists fly through the village, horse and foot, officers and rank and file, mingled together, with here and there a riderless horse, a torn flag, a wounded officer carried on a litter.

The rebels were not pursued, and the village wore its usual appearance as soon as they had left it behind.

They had not gone far, however, as our travelers in the village inn were led to conclude from an incident that occurred in the evening.

They were talking together, Willie, Percy and Lettie in the best room of the inn, when a voice was heard without, calling in a loud and commanding tone:

"House! Landlord!"

"Here, senor!" responded the host, bustling forward.

"You have some strangers in your house," said a tall, middle-aged man, dressed in military uniform, and wrapped in a large cloak. "I must see them."

"Good, senor," said the inn-keeper. "Enter, if you please."

He ushered the stranger into the room in which his guests were seated, and they, having heard what he said, looked up in surprise.

He glanced inquisitively from one to another, and his keen dark eyes lingered upon the beautiful face of Lettie Lennard for a moment before he spoke.

"Your names, if you please?" said he.

The guests, beginning with the Frenchman, complied with the requisition, much wondering what its purpose could be.

The stranger repeated Lettie's name as if he desired to remember it, and again his gaze settled upon her face.

Then he departed.

"Who is he?" Willie asked, as soon as he had left the room.

"Don Ramon Corrientes," replied the hostess. "He is a country gentleman, and lives a few

miles distant. Why he should come here and question my guests, I don't know."

"By the clink of his spurs he wears cavalry boots," observed Willie. "Is he an officer of the queen?"

"Oh, no!" replied the hostess; "it is said that he has fought with Carlists, and owed his life to the clemency of the queen."

"And if I am not mistaken he rode past this afternoon on a grey horse," observed Percy. "I had a good look at him, for he turned his head this way as he rode past."

The innkeeper had scarcely returned to the room when he was recalled to the bar by the entrance of three or four rough-looking men, who, but for their army belts and cartridge pouches, might have passed for peasants.

"We want some segars, landlord," said one.

"And we want to see the mountebank folks," added another. "Where is the young fellow who does the tumbling?"

"They are having their supper," replied the landlord, as he placed some segars before the men.

"I will have a peep at the pretty girl," said a keen-eyed individual of the party, and he strode along the passage, and looked into the room in which the travelers were supping.

He stared intently at Letty until Percy regarded him with stern indignation, and Willie sprang up to close the door; and then he rejoined his companions, and they all went out together.

An hour afterwards, just as the inmates of the inn were retiring to rest, a troop of cavalry rode into the village, and some of the men and horses were quartered there for the night, and the remainder at a farm-house in the neighborhood.

CHAPTER IX.

A SPANISH FAIR—AN UNEXPECTED APPEARANCE—THE FACE AT THE WINDOW—MYSTERIOUS DISAPPEARANCE OF LETTIE.

THE next town was reached about noon on the following day, and application made to the mayor for the use of the bull-ring, which was refused, with the remark that neither heretic English nor infidel Frenchman was wanted there.

The wanderers then applied for the use of a field near the town, which was the more readily granted that the owner was a notable Liberal, and seized that opportunity of evincing his hostility to the mayor, whose political proclivities were Absolutist.

Miranda was ridden on this occasion by both Lettie and Percy, together and separately.

Rochez proposed that they should proceed next day to a village at which a fair was to be held, and to this they all assented.

They were crossing a heath near the village, Lettie riding Miranda, and her companions trudging by her side, when the neighing of a horse was heard, and the mare, pricking up her ears at the sound, answered it.

"Here is a moun tfor you, Percy," cried Willie, joyfully, as a horse came thundering over the turf towards them, and was recognized as the spotted animal which he had ridden at the Circo Price.

The two steeds recognized each other, and the spotted horse placed his head upon the shoulder of Willie, who welcomed the animal with many caresses.

The village was reached half an hour afterwards, the locality of the fair having been indicated some time before by the discordant sounds of brass bands, drums, and gongs.

Pushing their way through a thronged avenue of stalls, the wanderers entered a broader space, where the attention of the pleasure-seekers who divided between the large tents in which refreshments were provided, and the villagers danced to the music of a gipsy band, and the caravans of the showmen, who had vied with each other in their noisy appeals to the crowd to lose no time in visiting the Arab serpent charmer, the Russian giant, the performing goats, and other living wonders.

In the rear of these shows, but accessible by a passage between a waxwork exhibition and the caravan in which the performing goats were to be seen, a ring was staked out by Willie and Percy, while Dominico beat the drum, and Rochez loudly invited the crowd to walk forward and witness the best circus performance ever seen at that or any other fair.

A crowd soon gathered around the ring, and the performance commenced at once, Rochez acting as ring-master until the time came for the introduction of his learned pony.

The spotted horse was careering around the

ring with Willie on his back, performing acrobatic feats with an agility and precision that called forth the loudest plaudits, when Lettie approached Percy, and directed his attention to a young man who had just pushed his way through the crowd until he reached the rope that formed the ring-fence.

"Isn't that the man who came in the night before last while we were at supper?" she inquired.

"The second fellow? Yes," he replied.

"I don't like his looks," said Lettie. "And see," she added, looking towards a gentleman on horseback on the outer edge of the ring, "there is Don Ramon! I am sure it is he."

Percy saw nothing remarkable in the fact of the two men's appearance there, and his attention was presently diverted to a lad whose vocation was intimated by the tights and white shoes that were visible beneath a much worn overcoat.

There was no mistaking the face that stared with fixed dark eyes at Willie Anderson; such a countenance could belong to no other boy in the universe than Devilshoof, however surprising it might be to met with it at a village fair in Spain.

As soon as Willie had finished his act Percy ran to the ring-fence, under which Devilshoof dived to meet him.

"Lor', Bellingham, who'd have thought of dropping on to you here?" exclaimed the acrobat.

"As little should I have thought of meeting you here," returned Percy.

"And Anderson, and Miss Lennard!" exclaimed Devilshoof, his deep-set eyes opening widely as he stared from one to the other.

"What, Cupid!" said Willie, coming towards them with a smile. "How are you, cully?"

"Bono!" responded Devilshoof. "And how's yourself, Miss Lennard? Me? Oh, I am pretty and well, as the saying is. I say, is that old bloke the governor?" he added, in a lower tone, indicating the Frenchman, who was now engaged in drawing out the various capacities of the educated pony.

Percy explained that it was a sharing concern, and asked him if he would like to be a partner in it.

"Wouldn't I?" returned Devilshoof. "It isn't much coin a fellow can pick up by doing a single slang; and this is quite a circus. I say, how about the horses?"

"Well, they did belong to Senor Alvarez," replied Percy, gravely; "but he will never ask for them, because he has 'gone where the good niggers go,' and who they belong to *de jure*, as the lawyers say, I really don't know. *De facto*, they are ours by right of possession, which constitutes nine points of the law, you know."

Rochez and Willie readily agreed that Devilshoof should join them on the same footing as the others, as there are many tricks in the acrobatic repertoire which cannot be performed singly, and he and Willie had been accustomed to perform them together.

The performances were continued until dusk, with an interval after each, for the double purpose of giving rest to the performers, and causing the spectators to disperse, with a view to the collection of another crowd when Domenico again beat the drum.

The absence of means for lighting the ring, at length obliged the weary wanderers to lead out the horses, and seek for lodgings.

Having found a quiet inn on the outskirts of the village, the horses were stabled, and they sat down to supper, over which Devilshoof told the story of his wanderings since he and Percy parted in the quarry in Kent, and heard how Willie escaped from prison, and what he and Percy had been doing since their meeting at Madrid.

Percy was relating the Carlist attack on the train, when a cry from Lettie interrupted him, and looking at her to discover the cause of her alarm, he saw that she was gazing towards the window.

"That man again!" she exclaimed, as soon as she could command her voice.

"What man?" inquired Willie, while Percy, who knew who she meant, sprang from his chair and rushed to the window.

"I see no one," he said, when he had opened it and looked out.

"I am certain that I saw a man's face, and that it was the man I pointed out to you in the fair," said Lettie.

There was a balcony around the house, over which Percy immediately looked, to discover whether there were any steps by which it could be reached from the ground below.

But there were none, nor was any ladder visible, or any tree near enough to the balcony to

enable a man to look into the window by climbing into it.

To satisfy himself upon these points was only the work of a moment, and Percy had no sooner done so, then he vaulted over the balcony and dropped to the ground.

He looked under the balcony, and then walked around the house.

But no one was near.

Not even the retiring footsteps of the intruder could be heard when he returned to the rear of the house and listened.

Thinking that the man might have entered the inn, he walked around to the front again, and looked in.

But only three or four peasants were there, playing at cards for the cigarettes they were smoking and the wine they were drinking, and the intruder was not among them.

He ascended the stairs, therefore, and rejoined his companions, to whom he related the failure of his search.

"I am certain that I saw him," persisted Lettie. "I am not fanciful, and I should know that man anywhere by the scar on his left cheek and the peculiar expression of his face."

"But there are no means of reaching the balcony, Lettie," said Percy.

"Perhaps there were two of them, and one mounted the other," observed Willie.

This seemed feasible.

But where could they have gone so quickly as to evade Percy's attempt to discover them?

This query could not be answered, and the majority of the party soon ceased to think of the matter.

The sounds from the fair, subdued, and in some degree harmonized by distance, were still audible when they retired to their respective chambers, but before midnight all was still, and they were fast asleep.

Willie and Percy, who occupied the same room, were suddenly startled from their repose, without being conscious of the cause.

"What was that?" inquired Percy, listening intently for any sound that might indicate the nature of the alarm.

"I heard a scream, if I wasn't dreaming," returned Willie, rubbing his eyes.

"Something startled me," said Percy, slipping from his bed, and approaching the window, where he was immediately joined by his companion.

Darkness reigned without, and no being was visible.

"I see nothing," said Willie.

"Hark!" whispered Percy. "I think I hear voices near. Listen?"

Willie opened the window very quietly, and both listened attentively; but for a few moments nothing was heard.

Then the sound of wheels and horses' feet told them that some vehicle was being rapidly driven away from the inn.

"Some late traveler stopping to water his horses," observed Willie, as he closed the window.

"It must have been more than that," Percy objected to his companion's explanation.

"I daresay I was dreaming," said Willie, as he rolled into bed again.

"Bah! we were not both dreaming," returned Percy, with a little impatience at the suggestion. "And we were all wide awake when that fellow got into the balcony."

"But we didn't all see the fellow," observed Willie.

"Lettie could not be mistaken, or she would not be so positive," said Percy. "I have a good mind to go to her door, and see if she is all right."

"And rouse her out of her sleep, and make her think the house is on fire," observed Willie. "You had better turn in again and go to sleep. The house is so quiet that nobody can have been disturbed except ourselves."

There seemed sense in this view, Percy thought, and he was unwilling to alarm Lettie unnecessarily.

He took his companion's advice, therefore, though more than an hour elapsed before he fell asleep again, so occupied was his mind with the possible cause of the disturbance of his slumber.

When their hostess served breakfast on the following morning, Lettie had not presented herself.

"Shall I call the young lady?" inquired the hostess, addressing Rochez, whom she looked upon, owing to his age, as the director of the party.

The Frenchman consulted his companions with a look.

"Yes," said Percy, and the affirmative was repeated by Rochez.

In a few minutes the landlady returned, looking grave.

"She is not there," said she. "Finding that she did not answer, I went in and found the room vacant. The most surprising thing about it is, that the clothes she wore yesterday are still there, but perhaps the young lady—"

Percy waited to hear no more, but sprang from his seat.

"She must be looked for," he exclaimed, snatching up his hat. "I will not desist from the search until I find her."

"Have something to eat, first," said Willie. "Half-an-hour will make no difference."

Percy made no reply, but ran off.

Willie hastily dispatched his breakfast, and ran down to the stables, where Percy was just about to mount Miranda.

"Wait a moment," he exclaimed; "I will go with you."

Hastily saddling the spotted horse, he vaulted to the animal's back, and in another moment they were both off on the road.

CHAPTER X.

THE NIGHT ALARM—THE LONE HOUSE—DON RAMON CORRIENTES—LETTIE'S PERIL—AN OPPORTUNE ARRIVAL.

LET us now go back a few hours for an explanation of Lettie Lennard's mysterious disappearance.

Before extinguishing her light, she had looked from the window of her chamber, for the apparition of the man's face had caused her some alarm, and though her nerves were as strong as those of a person of her profession should be, an uneasy feeling had been excited in her mind by the man's persistent reappearances.

Though she could not divine the motive, the idea that she was being watched for some purpose had taken possession of her mind, and she could not divest herself of it.

No living thing was visible from her window, however, and all was still around the house.

She extinguished the light, therefore, and in another minute was in bed.

About an hour after midnight, when all the villagers were asleep, and profound darkness covered the earth, a closed carriage was driven through the village, and stopped at the inn at which our travellers were reposing.

Two men dismounted from the box, and approached the inn, glancing at the upper windows, and moving with the caution of prowling beasts of prey.

"That is the window of the English girl's room," whispered one of them; "give me a back, Sancho, and I will be in the balcony in the snapping of a pistol."

Sancho stooped down below the balcony, and his companion planting one foot on his knee, and following it with the other on his shoulder, mounted as nimbly as a squirrel.

For a few moments he stood before the window motionless, listening for sounds within.

All was still, however, and he proceeded to unfasten the window by introducing the blade of a knife; then he opened it, and stepped into the room.

Lettie slept soundly.

Carefully folding around her the sheet and blanket upon which she was lying, the intruder raised her from the bed, and bore her to the balcony.

Then it was that the girl, awakened suddenly from her sleep, uttered in terror and bewilderment, the cry which had disturbed her companions.

But the next moment a corner of the blanket was drawn over her face, a hand was pressed upon her mouth, and she was lowered into the arms of her abductor's companion, who waited below the balcony.

Sancho ran swiftly towards the carriage, followed by his companion.

The terrified girl was placed within the vehicle, and Sancho closed the door, clambered to the driver's seat, which already had been mounted by his companion, and drove off at a fast trot.

The instant Lettie felt herself released from Sancho's encircling arms, and relieved from the pressure of his hand upon her mouth, she dashed the blanket from her face, and found herself confronted with Don Ramon Corrientes.

"Ah!" she ejaculated, her dark eyes dilating with surprise and terror; "what is the meaning of this outrage? Why am I dragged from my friends?"

"You shall know that when we reach the place to which we are going," Don Ramon replied, regarding her with kindling eyes. "In the mean-

time, you need not be alarmed; I am a gentleman."

"This is not the act of a gentleman," returned Lettie, drawing the blanket and sheet around her, and regarding Don Damon with mingled resentment and disdain.

"Regard it then as the desperate act of an ardent lover," said the Spaniard.

"You misuse the term," rejoined Lettie, with a look of disgust.

"Admirer, then," said Don Ramon, with an impetuosity of manner in strange contrast with the feeling expressed in his passionate glances.

Both his words and looks, however, impressed Lettie with the conviction that her situation was one of greater peril than if she had been subjected to arbitrary arrest on any pretext by the constituted authorities; for the whole of the northeast of Spain was at that time in a disturbed and disorganized state, and lawless acts were every day committed with impunity.

She looked from the carriage, to the right and left, but not a single light was visible, and in a few minutes the girl was left behind.

It was clear to her mind that help was not to be hoped for, and equally so that it would be useless to appeal to the Spaniards' generosity and compassion.

"You will repent this outrage, sir," she said, on arriving at this conviction. "My friends will not rest until I am at liberty, and, having discovered me, will move Heaven and earth to secure the punishment of every one concerned in it."

"I accept the risk," returned Don Ramon, with a smile.

"You think you will be able to evade the consequences of your dastardly act," said Lettie. "Dismiss that idea from your mind. I am English, and the intervention of the British ambassador in Madrid will certainly prove stronger than any influence you may have in these parts."

"We shall see," returned Don Ramon. "By the time your friends have discovered your retreat you will have no desire to rejoin them."

Lettie shuddered and became silent.

The night was too dark for her to have observed the direction in which the carriage was being driven, even if she had been acquainted with the country; but when she again looked out, in the hope of discovering some house, the inmates of which might be aroused by her screams, the narrowness of the road showed that the vehicle had been turned off the highway.

No village was passed through, however, and the few isolated farmhouses and peasants' cottages that were on the route were passed in the darkness unobserved.

It was still dark when, by the stopping of the carriage, they seemed to have reached the end of the journey.

Lettie looked anxiously from the vehicle, and saw a large house standing within a walled enclosure.

One of the men dismounted and rang a bell; and after some delay, a gate was thrown open, and the carriage was driven into a yard.

The gate closed with a clang, and the carriage stopped again at a door.

No light shone from any of the windows.

The door of the carriage was opened by Sancho, and Don Ramon stepped out.

"Now, my beauty," said he, offering Lettie the assistance of his hand.

The poor girl looked around, but saw no light, no person of her own sex, only Don Ramon and his two myrmidons.

She stepped out shuddering and trembling, and Don Ramon unlocked the door.

"You have nothing to fear," said he, with a touch of compassion in his tone; "you will not be harmed; so do not look so frightened, sweet one."

They entered a spacious hall and he closed the door, struck a match, and lighted a small lamp which he took from a bracket.

The light glimmered upon dark panelling, rusty suits of armor, and trophies of ancient weapons.

Don Ramon attempted to pass an arm around Lettie as he advanced towards a flight of stairs, but she shrank from him, and he allowed her to ascend unassisted.

At the head of the stairs a corridor was traversed, and then they ascended another flight of stairs.

The Spaniard opened a door in the corridor above these, and showed Lettie a spacious chamber, comfortless-looking, however, according to English ideas.

"You see your chamber, senora?" said he; "enter; I give you my word—the word of a

Spanish gentleman—that you shall not be disturbed. Rest, sweet one, on the faith of that assurance.”

It was impossible for Lettie to feel the confidence with which he strove to inspire her; but she entered the room, having no alternative, and closed the door.

She waited until Don Ramon's retiring footsteps were heard no longer, and then she examined the door, with a view to securing herself against intrusion.

There was no fastening, however, and nothing in the room that was not either too heavy to be moved or too light to be of any use for the purpose of barricading the door.

She looked from the window, but could see only a few trees standing out blackly against the lighter gloom of the sky.

With a heavy sigh the poor girl threw herself upon the bed, and rolled her blanket around her, to wait for the coming of day.

Never had the hours seemed to pass so slowly.

At length, however, the grey light of dawn stole into the chamber, and she again looked from the window.

Below were the cattle-yard and out buildings of a farm, and beyond were fields, stretching as far as she could see.

Presently the rising sun reddened the sky, but it was a long time afterwards before a human form became visible or any sign of life was heard in that large and lonely mansion.

Then a man was seen in a distant field with a yoke of oxen, and another moved about the yard below.

A little later footsteps sounded on the corridors and on the stairs, and doors opened and closed in different parts of the house.

Presently a little old woman, with a brown and shrivelled face, entered the chamber, carrying an armful of feminine clothing.

“Here, my pretty senora,” said she, “I have brought you some clothes, for I reckon you will be wanting some. And what would you like for breakfast?”

“Thanks for the clothes,” returned Lettie; “and if you would earn a reward and my eternal gratitude, help me to get away from this house.”

“That I dare not,” said the old woman, shaking her head; “and if you are wise, you will not think of it until the matter is disposed to let you go.”

“I have been dragged from my bed, and brought here against my will,” said Lettie. “Do, for the love of Heaven, help me!”

“There's no use in asking, my dear,” returned the old woman, whose coldness of manner contrasted unnaturally with her endearing mode of address. “You just put on the clothes, and I'll get a cup of chocolate, and then you'll feel more comfortable.”

Lettie sighed, and proceeded to dress herself in the clothes brought by the old woman, which fitted her tolerably well, the woman retiring during the operation, and returning in about half an hour with the materials of an excellent breakfast.

“Do eat, senora,” said she. “You may be as happy as a bird here, if you don't mind the loneliness of the house.”

“How can I feel happy while I am a prisoner, and my friends are searching for me, wondering what has become of me?” returned Lettie.

“The master will be your friend now, my dear,” said the old woman.

“He is a wretch—a brute!” exclaimed Lettie, indignant at the suggestion.

The woman shrugged her skinny shoulders and retired, leaving her charge alone until mid-day, when she brought up her dinner and some wine.

Lettie passed the day looking from the window and thinking of her position and the chances of her discovery by Willie and Percy, whom she felt sure would be prompt and persevering in their search for her.

Having seen only the old woman during the day, except from the window, she ventured, when it grew dusk, to make an endeavor to evade her vigilance and make her escape.

Opening the door of her room very cautiously, she glided noiselessly along the corridors and down the stairs without encountering any person, but on reaching the hall her intended flight was prevented by the appearance of her attendant.

“Ah, you would run away!” exclaimed the old woman, with a look of alarm. “Would you have the master kill me, then?”

“It would serve you right,” returned Lettie, as she endeavored to open the outer door.

“Here, Miguel—Tomas!” screamed the old woman, seizing her by the arm.

Two men responded to her call, and the poor girl was forced to return to the chamber which had been assigned to her.

As she sat by the window, listening and trembling, she heard the heavy footsteps of Miguel as he tramped along the corridor, in which he was acting as a sentry.

Escape was now hopeless.

Twilight was deepening into darkness when Don Ramon startled the unhappy girl with a visit.

“Good evening, senora,” he said, on entering the chamber. “I trust my pretty bird has not found her cage quite unendurable.”

“You are right in calling it a cage,” she returned, rising, and shrinking from his approach. “If you are a man, Don Ramon, you will suffer me to leave.”

“For what purpose then should I have brought you here, pretty one?” he asked, endeavoring to embrace her, and to impress a kiss upon her warm cheek.

In the midst of a struggle, the sounds of a violent entry and an altercation reached them from below, and Don Ramon, releasing her, advanced to the door and listened.

The regular tramp of soldiers sounded along the corridor, and the door was thrown open, revealing an officer, backed by a file of men.

“Don Ramon Corrientes, I arrest you in the queen's name!” said the officer. “Resistance is useless, for my men surround the house.”

Don Ramon muttered a savage exclamation as he went out, and the soldiers closed around him.

“Save me!” cried Lettie, addressing the queen's officer with clasped hands. “I have been brought here by force, and my friends know not where to seek me.”

“You are free to depart,” returned the officer. “So far, at least, as I am concerned,” he added, turning away from her. “You are not included in the warrant for the arrest of Don Ramon Corrientes.”

Without a moment's thought she followed him along the corridors and down the stairs into the hall.

Only a soldier was there, and he allowed her to pass without question or hindrance.

In another minute she was at liberty, but without the least idea where she was or the name or distance of the village from which she had been brought.

CHAPTER XI.

DEVILSHOOF ON THE NAIL—THE DOCTOR AND THE DEVIL—ENCOUNTER WITH BRIGANDS.

THE performances given in the little circus lost much of their attractiveness on the second day of the fair, through the absence of three of their performers and the two horses, and the receipts suffered a proportionate diminution.

Willie and Percy not having returned when their companion reached the inn, Devilshoof, feeling both anxious and lonely, went out in the hope of meeting with them.

About a mile from the village in the opposite direction to that which had been taken by Willie and Percy, he saw two horsemen coming towards him, and thinking them to be his companions, he quickened his pace, anxious to learn whether any clew to Lettie Lennard had been found.

Before he was near enough to recognize them, however, they turned into another road, where they urged their horses to a trot.

“Thinking so much about that girl that they didn't notice me,” muttered Devilshoof. “That isn't the way back, though; but perhaps they have got a clew that way.”

He followed in the track of the two horsemen therefore, until the darkness concealed them from his view, when he paused to consider whether he should go on or return.

The appearance of a light a little distance ahead induced him to take the former course, and on turning a curve of the road, he saw before him a sufficient number of twinkling lights to show him that he was approaching a town.

The environs were soon reached, but the two horsemen were not to be seen.

He strolled on, looking at the shop windows and the street folk, and contrasting them in his own mind with those of the country towns of England.

He was startled from this amusement by the sudden apparition of a face so much like Lettie Lennard's that he would immediately have pronounced it hers, but for the figure to which it belonged being clothed in the costume of Spain.

The girl was standing at the door of a chemist's shop in conversation with a curly-headed

young man, who combined with the sale of drugs practice of medicine and surgery.

“Can that be Lettie?” he asked himself; but as he advanced to solve the doubt by a nearer view of her face, the girl entered the shop, and the young doctor closed the door.

Peering between the bottles and jars in the window, Devilshoof could see the girl's face, however, and the impression upon his mind that he saw Lettie Lennard became, in spite of her Spanish attire, considerably deepened.

She looked weary and sad, and the expression of her countenance as she sat at the counter conversing with the doctor, was so much like Lettie's that Devilshoof was upon the point of entering the shop when the girl arose, and followed the Spaniard into a room behind the shop.

The acrobat's first impulse was to wait until the girl came out, but the door between the shop and the room behind had scarcely closed when two young men rode up the street, dismounted before the doctor's door, and entered the shop, leaving their horses in the charge of a ragged, brown-faced boy.

Both the men and the horses resembled those who had been mistaken by Devilshoof for Willie Anderson and Percy Bellingham.

Peering through the window again, he saw them pass through the shop without a pause, and enter the room in the rear.

“Who are they?” said he, turning to the brown-faced boy.

“Doctors,” the boy replied; “larky fellows, I knows 'em.”

“Larky fellows, eh?” said Devilshoof. “I wonder what lark they are up to now?”

For a moment he thought of entering the shop, and asking for the girl, but the reflecting that he would probably be kicked out for his pains, restrained him, and he looked about instead for a means of reaching the back of the house.

At a little distance there was a by-street.

He counted the houses between, and ran down it until he reached a narrow lane, parallel with the street in which the chemist's shop stood, and skirting the small gardens in the rear.

The light of a young moon which had just risen, enabled him to count the houses, and thus discover the doctor's.

In another moment he was over the fence, and advancing stealthily to the back of the house.

The light in the room behind the shop was extinguished as he approached, but the shutters were not closed, nor the curtains drawn across the window, and the moon shone directly into the room.

Crouching below the window with his eyes just above the sill, he saw the girl sitting in an armchair, leaning back, with her eyes closed and her form motionless, as if in a swoon.

The curly-headed young doctor was standing before her, waving his right hand across her face with slow and regular passes.

The two young men who had entered from the street were standing by, regarding the operation with countenances expressive of mingled wonder and incredulity.

“Santo Jacomo!” exclaimed one of them, crossing himself as he spoke, “I like not this business. It savors of devilry.”

“Nonsense, man!” returned the young doctor. “Is all scientific progress the work of Satan, think you?”

“Alfonso smells brimstone,” said the third member of the group, with a smile; “he calls everything diabolic which is beyond his understanding.”

“Restore her, Gildez, for the love of San Jacomo!” said Alfonso, without heeding the sneer. “I fear that she may die.”

“Nay, you have witnessed nothing yet,” returned Gildez. “You shall see her, while in this state, do whatever I command her, and hear her make her confession.”

“No—no!” urged Alfonso, earnestly. “What was that?” he asked, suddenly, with a start, as a slight noise, occasioned by some movement of Devilshoof, reached his ears.

“The devil!” returned his companion, in an ironical tone.

“Ah, see!” cried Alfonso, turning pale, and pointing to the window.

The others turned quickly, started by his cry of genuine terror, and saw the dark shadow of Devilshoof projected by the moonbeams upon the window and the wall, as he stood upon the sill, with his arms raised above his head, in the attitude of the Bottle Imp in the old romantic drama.

With a cry of terror Alfonso rushed from the room, and his companion and the doctor, seized with a panic, followed him headlong.

Devilshoof immediately smashed a pane of

glass, unfastened the window, opened it, and sprang into the room.

"Miss Lennard—Miss Lennard!" he exclaimed, as he shook the unconscious girl by the shoulder.

Finding that she was insensible, he made an effort to raise her in his arms, and carry her to the window; but her weight was too much for him, and he had to drag her along the floor, while supporting her with his arms.

He managed to lift her through the window, and having deposited her upon the ground below, vaulted after her, and looked around for some place of temporary concealment, fearing that Gildez and his friends would soon recover from their panic and return to the room.

There was a jasmine-covered alcove at the bottom of the garden, so constructed that the interior could not be seen from the house; and to this place the young acrobat partly carried and partly dragged the unconscious girl.

"Miss Lennard—Miss Lennard!" he whispered, at the same time slapping her hands in desperation, lest she should be sought and discovered before he could rouse her and get her away from the bower.

Several minutes passed before the girl became conscious, and even then she seemed dazed and weak.

"Where am I?" she asked, in a faint voice, at the same time raising herself with an effort from the seat on which she was reclining. "Who is it with me? I thought I knew the voice."

"It is me, Miss Lennard," replied the acrobat. "It is Cupid. You remember Cupid, Miss Lennard, don't you?"

"Cupid?" said the girl. "Where am I, then? Where are Anderson and Bellingham?"

"They went in search of you as soon as you was missed," replied Devilshoof; "and they had not returned when I left the inn this evening. But we mustn't stay here talking, Miss Lennard. Do you feel strong enough to walk?"

"I will try," she replied, leaning upon the lad's shoulder. "Where are we?"

"That is more than I can tell you," returned Devilshoof; "but I know the way back to the inn."

Opening a gate, which he had not observed before, he supported her into the lane, and along the street by which it was approached.

"I really cannot walk far," said she, as she dragged herself wearily along. "Oh, do get a chaise or something, Cupid. I shall never get there else."

In this embarrassing situation the young acrobat acted with promptitude and decision.

He led the girl into a confectioner's shop, procured her a seat and a glass of lemonade, and ran off to obtain some conveyance.

After some delay in finding a vehicle for hire, and some hesitation on the part of the owner to let it on the representations of a lad of most unprepossessing appearance, who could not speak good Spanish, he was enabled to return in the chaise to the confectioner's, where the driver, finding his story confirmed by a pretty girl in the national costume, agreed to drive them to the inn, which they described to him.

They had driven half the distance between the town and the road that passed through the village at which our wanderers were staying, when five or six men emerged suddenly from the shadow of the trees, and, while two of them menaced the driver with threats of death from their leveled pistols if he dared to drive on, the others opened the doors of the carriage and demanded their valuables.

"We have none," said Devilshoof and Lettie together, and the former confirmed the statement by turning his pockets inside out.

A whispered conference was held by the brigands, and the travelers caught the words: "The circus folks—their company will ransom them—the girl is English."

Then they were dragged out of the chaise, and the driver was told to turn back, which he did at once, not without giving vent to his wrath at losing his fare in a choice selection of Spanish abuse.

"Come," said one of the brigands, grasping Lettie's arm, and another seizing Devilshoof, they quitted the road, and began to ascend a narrow and steep path.

"I cannot go any further," gasped Lettie, when she had been hurried along by the robber, who held her until they had nearly reached the brow of a wooded hill.

She sank exhausted upon a bare rock.

"Get up!" growled the brigand, pulling her by the arm.

"The young lady is unable to walk, or she would not have been riding," observed Devilshoof.

"She must walk," exclaimed another of the

band, lending a hand to lift the poor girl to her feet. "Confound them! who are these?"

The exclamation and the question were prompted by the appearance of two horsemen, who had just come over the crest of the ridge, and were riding slowly down the narrow path, one behind the other.

"Hooray!" cried Devilshoof, with a caper. "That's Anderson in front with the panther horse, and Bellingham behind on the brown mare."

"Hold your noise, you young imp!" exclaimed the brigand who held Devilshoof in his grasp, which he relaxed as he spoke, with the intention of giving his captive a blow, but the acrobat dived to avoid it, executed a hand-spring, and ran forward to meet the horsemen.

Forgetting disappointment and weariness, Willie Anderson urged his steed forward on recognizing Devilshoof by his voice and the sample of their profession which he had displayed, and was followed by Percy Bellingham as closely as the narrowness of the path permitted.

"Help, Willie!" cried Lettie, and the next moment the spotted horse dashed into the group of brigands, and one of them rolled over on the rugged path.

Two of the ruffians seized the bridle of Willie's steed, and would have dragged him from the saddle, but at the next moment Percy drew a pistol, shot one of them, felled the other with a blow of the stock, and then bestowed a similar token of remembrance upon the brigand who held Lettie?

As the ruffian whom Willie had ridden down, rose from the ground, he saw one of his companions bleeding on the path, and two raising themselves with the marks of Percy's pistol-stock upon their bleeding foreheads.

He turned and fled into the wood, and the rest followed his example as quickly as they could, carrying with them the man whom Percy had shot, but who did not appear to be mortally wounded.

"Dear Lettie!" exclaimed Percy, springing from the saddle, and raising Lettie, who had fainted, in his arms. "Put her up before me, Willie, and let us be off."

This was done, and in less than half an hour, they were all safe at the village inn.

CHAPTER XII.

DR. LANGTON AT THE END OF HIS JOURNEY—
DEVEREL'S REMORSE AND DESPAIR—A RUSSIAN FAIR—OLD ACQUAINTANCES.

THREE months after the departure from Madrid, Dr. Langton found himself in St. Petersburg and at the end of his journey.

He had traced Sir Guy Deverel from one city to another, sometimes losing the trail, but always coming up again, until he reached the Russian capital, and discovered the baronet at a hotel in the Nevski Prospekt.

Dr. Langton, sleek, and highly respectable-looking, dressed with his usual scrupulous regard for appearance, and wearing his usual benevolent expression, and calm and self-prepared manner, entered the hotel, and presenting his card to a waiter, desired that it might be taken to Sir Guy Deverel.

The baronet who had aged considerably since we introduced him to the reader at his Parisian lodging, groaned when he saw the name upon the card.

"I will see this gentleman," said he, with a slight hesitation before the last word which struck the waiter as significant.

Dr. Langton entered a few minutes afterwards and bowed with grave politeness to the baronet, who regarded him sternly, without reciprocating his courtesy.

"Good-morning, Sir Guy," said the doctor, placing his hat and gloves upon the table. "What charming weather for Russia."

"You have come now upon business, I presume," observed Sir Guy; "you want money?"

"The universal want, Sir Guy," returned Dr. Langton, with a bland smile. "But had we not better be seated? You are not looking so well as when I saw you in Paris."

"What there needs to be said between us can be said in a few words," rejoined the baronet. "Certain communications which have been made to me by my solicitors since you received that check from me in Paris, have determined me to part with no more money until my nephew is in my charge."

"And then?" said the doctor, as he seated himself near the table, on finding the baronet did not invite him to sit.

"Then I will pay you, though you have not deserved it, the reward of five hundred pounds

which I have offered for his discovery," returned Sir Guy Deverel.

"Not enough, Sir Guy, by a long way," said Dr. Langton. "I could not entertain any such proposition for a single moment."

"It is the only one which I shall make," returned the baronet. "If you refuse it, I have no more to say."

"Oh, yes," said the doctor, with a serene smile. "We shall not part like that, Sir Guy. Remember what I said to you when we met in Paris."

"I have not forgotten it," returned Sir Guy Deverel; "but I will brave the worst that you can do rather than continue to impoverish my nephew's estate while you withhold him from me."

"You did not always care so much for him," observed Dr. Langton. "From what time does your tardily developed affection for the lad date?"

"I will not bandy words with you, Dr. Langton," rejoined the baronet; "let it suffice that I am desirous, most earnestly desirous, for his discovery, and his restoration to his proper position in society, and I will do nothing that does not tend to that end."

"Then we may as well put the lad out of the category of matters that have been settled between us," said the doctor, with a wave of his fat white hand, which made the diamond on one of his fingers flash in the sunlight. "It rests with me, Sir Guy, not with you, to say whether he shall ever succeed to the baronetcy and estates. Now about the other matter. There are two quarters' payments due to me, and living in St. Petersburg is expensive, to say nothing of traveling and inquiry expenses during the last three months."

"I will not give you a single rouble!" exclaimed Sir Guy Deverel, firmly.

"You prefer to have the secret of the blue chamber revealed to the world?" said the doctor, regarding him intently.

"All the secrets you have to tell," returned the baronet, excitedly; "tell the world, if you will, all my crimes, and let it be known that the estate is not mine—that I am plain Guy Deverel, and that my nephew is the true baronet. What then? I cannot be more wretched than I am now."

The doctor knitted his brows, and reflected for a few moments before he spoke again.

He had not expected to find the baronet in this mood, and he was not prepared for it.

He could not negotiate with Sir Guy on the basis of the latter's proposition, for he had not received any communication from Willie Anderson since he left Madrid, and had had no clew by which to trace him.

He had no doubt that he could discover the youth, for he combined in a remarkable degree the qualifications of a clever detective with those of the successful criminal; but in the meantime Sir Guy Deverel might escape him again, and he needed a supply of money at once.

On the other hand there was nothing to be gained by revealing all that he knew concerning Deverel, which he could not do without the risk of betraying himself to the London police, besides killing the goose that laid the golden eggs.

"Give me a written undertaking to pay me a thousand a year as long as you and I may live, upon receiving such information as may enable you to discover your nephew," he at length said:

"You know that I cannot do that," returned the baronet; "I will not rob the estate of another penny."

"Then I will negotiate with Sir Rupert, your nephew," said Dr. Langton, rising.

Sir Guy bowed, and the doctor quitted the room.

He looked grave as he descended the stairs, and his broad, marble-like forehead became corrugated as he walked slowly along the Nevski Prospekt.

He was musing upon the situation created by Sir Guy Deverel's unexpected and inflexible resolve, and the course which it obliged him to take for the promotion of his own interests.

By the time he had reached his hotel he had resolved to advertise for Willie Anderson in half-a-dozen of the most widely-circulated newspapers of Madrid, Paris, Berlin and Vienna.

As he sat at his desk, however, the sounds of music borne by the breeze from some distance, and seeming to mingle the strains of several brass bands with those of a dozen organs and hurdy-gurdies, reached his ears.

"Are all the itinerant German horn-blowers and gipsy-bag-pipers in St. Petersburg giving a monster concert?" he asked of a waiter who brought him a letter.

"It is the fair, monsieur," replied the waiter. "The music that monsieur hears is that of the bands of Salmansky's Circus, and Morok's Menagerie."

"Salmansky's Circus, eh?" said the doctor, stroking his mustache as the name suggested a new idea to him.

He knew that Salmansky's Circus was famous from the Rhine to the Urals, and from the Baltic to the Balkans.

"Yes, monsieur," responded the waiter; "one of the best traveling, as monsieur probably knows. Everybody, I hear, is flocking to see the English riders, and the great performing elephant."

"English riders, eh?" said the doctor. "Who are they?"

"Mr. Bellingham, Mr. Nobbs, and Miss Lennard," was the reply.

"I must see them," observed the doctor, and as the waiter left the room, he leaned back in his chair with an air of thought. "Those names seem familiar to me," he murmured, as he strove to recall the places and circumstances in which he had heard them. "Bellingham? Ah, the owner of the Old Quarry House! But stay—there was an equestrian of that name announced to appear at the Circo Price. It may be he. Has Anderson taken the name of his foster-father, the clown, I wonder? It is likely enough."

It was likely enough to induce Dr. Langton to sally forth at once and proceed to the scene of the fair, to which he was guided by the sounds which had attracted his attention.

The exterior of the platform of the circus was unoccupied, and the sounds from within were evidence of a performance being in progress, for the conclusion of which Dr. Langton waited.

Presently a crowd poured over the platform of the circus, and the manager came forward with a trumpet, with which he sounded a flourish, preparatory to a loud-toned invitation to the crowd below to lose no time in seeing the performances of the unrivalled English and German equestrians and acrobats, the female wire-walker, and the huge performing elephant.

Dr. Langton walked around to the side of the show, which was a wooden building of considerable dimensions, and saw several men and lads leading horses, and variously attired as a jockey, an English fox-hunter, a Russian hussar, a Mexican lasso-thrower, and a couple of acrobats in tights.

The latter he recognized immediately as Willie Anderson and Devilshoof, otherwise Cupid.

"Nobbs!" said he, touching the former on the shoulder.

Willie started, turned around quickly, and saw Dr. Langton.

"I can't stay to speak to you now, doctor," said he, as he vaulted to the back of a cream-colored horse. "We have to parade in the front now."

"Give me a call," said the doctor, taking out his card case, and giving Willie a card on which he had written the name of the hotel at which he was staying.

"Ah, if I have time," returned Willie, in a careless tone, and then the cavalcade moved towards the front, and the equestrians urged their horses up the steep incline, by which the platform was reached.

The doctor frowned.

He saw that Willie was disposed to resist his influence.

He returned to the hotel, and stayed within the remainder of the day, but Willie Anderson did not present himself.

Dr. Langton was not surprised.

It took a great deal to surprise him with his cool head, varied knowledge of the world, and extensive observation of human nature.

About noon on the following day, when the bustle and noise of the fair were about to commence, he was standing calmly observant, near the side entrance of the circus.

He had not stood there many minutes when Willie Anderson and Devilshoof came up, followed by Percy Bellingham and Lettie Lennard.

"Good-morning, Doctor Langton," said Willie, lifting his hat.

"Morning, doctor," said Devilshoof, with a clown's bow.

"You have not given me a call," returned the doctor, responding to their salutations, with imperturbable good humor. "May I ask why?"

"I thought you would understand why," said Willie. "We had some conversation on the subject at Grove House, you may remember."

Dr. Langton nodded assent.

"You see, doctor, you hold all the cards, and I can't see the game," continued Willie.

"What would you have?" inquired the doctor.

"I want to see my uncle or his solicitors, and to know how I stand," rejoined Willie.

Dr. Langton shrugged and smiled, but did not reply.

"Who is that pretty girl?" he asked, as Lettie and Percy entered the circus; "is she an Italian?"

"She is English," replied Willie. "That is Miss Lennard, the equestrienne."

"Are you sure?" the doctor asked, looking after Lettie with an intent gaze. "I could almost have sworn that I had seen her in the Italian peasant costume."

"English girls sometimes wear that in the streets of London," observed Willie, with a smile.

"Ah, true!" returned Dr. Langton. "You will not trust me, then?" he said, after a thoughtful pause.

"I didn't say that," returned Willie. "But you don't trust me, and I don't want to burn my fingers by pulling chestnuts out of the fire for somebody else."

"Very well," said the doctor, with a sigh, "you will repent your present decision. Your uncle is in this city—beware of him!"

Before Willie could express his surprise at the intelligence thus unexpectedly communicated to him, Dr. Langton had turned away.

CHAPTER XIII.

A THIEVES' DEN—LEVI MANASSES—A NEFARIOUS PLOT—HOW IT SUCCEEDED.

At a late hour that night Dr. Langton was threading his way through some of the narrowest, worst lighted, and most disreputable lanes in St. Petersburg.

He looked warily about him as he went along, and on entering a lane darker than any he had yet traversed, he drew his hat lower over his forehead, and scanned with keen glances both the houses which he passed and the men and women whom he encountered.

"Can you tell me in which house one Manasses lives?" the doctor inquired of a hairy-faced man, who, with his hands in his pocket, was smoking a long pipe, with a large bowl.

"Is it Levi Manasses?" the man asked, without removing his pipe from his mouth, or his hands from his pockets.

The doctor nodded.

"Then you will find him at the Flying Horse," said the man. "But where he lives is more than I can tell you."

Langton thanked him, and crossed the lane to a wooden house, larger and better lighted than its neighbors, from which came a confused hubbub of loud voices, mingled with the clinking of pots and glasses.

Opening a door, he entered a bar-room, where through a blue haze of tobacco smoke, he saw a score or so of villainous-looking men, smoking pipes, drinking vodka—a cheap, fiery liquor distilled from rye—and talking of their old crimes, and planning new ones.

There was a general cessation of conversation on his entrance, and many a suspicious glance was cast at him as he advanced to the bar, looking around for the man of whom he was in search.

In the darkest corner sat a tall, thin, elderly man, with keen, dark eyes lighting up a parchment-like face.

His garments were patched and greasy, and his bony fingers held a glass of that fiery spirit so much in demand.

"Manasses!" said the doctor, approaching him.

The man arose, and made a profound bow.

"I am glad to meet my old coadjutor," said Dr. Langton. "We had some dealings together at Warsaw, you know."

"I remember," returned Manasses.

"Is there such a thing as a private room to be had here?" the doctor inquired.

"Come this way," said Manasses, lifting a flap of the bar, after drinking his vodka, and passing behind it, making, as he did so, a sign to the landlord, a corpulent, heavy-looking man, who was sitting on a cask, smoking a long, silver-mounted pipe.

Manasses opened a door, and led the way up a narrow flight of stairs, steep, dirty, and creaking.

The doctor followed him into a small room, where they were in darkness until Manasses struck a match and lit a candle.

"We must have something to drink, I suppose, for the good of the house," observed Dr. Langton, as they seated themselves at a table. "It will not contribute much to our own comfort, I am

afraid. How you can drink that infernal vodka I cannot imagine."

Manasses made no reply, but rang a bell, the tintinabulation of which brought up the fat, heavy-looking landlord.

"Is it possible for us to have a bottle of wine?" inquired the doctor.

"I don't know," returned the host, speaking slowly and with an air of doubt. "I think not; what can we have better than vodka?"

"Vodka be it, then," said the doctor, with a shrug. "A gill of the stuff," he added, with a look of disgust.

Not a word was spoken until the landlord had brought the liquor and had left the room.

Two glasses were brought, but Langton filled only one.

"You must drink for both of us," said he; "the smell of the stuff is enough for me. I have tasted the aquadiente of Spain, which tastes like a mixture of bad brandy and worse rum, and your vodka is several degrees worse."

"You spoke of our dealings at Warsaw," observed Manasses, rubbing his bony hands one over the other. "It is other business in the same line?"

The doctor did not immediately reply, but regarded the speaker's shabby garments with a look of mingled compassion and disgust.

"You would want renovating before you could present yourself at a bank or money-changer's bureau with a handful of English notes," he at length said.

"Easily done," returned Manasse, with a smile. "Old Gideon will fit me out for the day, and charge very little for the use of the garments."

"You would look eminently respectable in a suit of broadcloth, I have no doubt," said Langton. "But we will talk of that presently. My more immediate business in this pleasant neighborhood is of a different character. I want something done which is not in your line, Manasses, but in which you can assist me, if you will."

"With much pleasure, doctor, that is, if it doesn't go the length of——"

He completed the sentence by the significant pantomime of drawing the side of his bony hand across his throat.

"What do you take me for, Manasses?" said the doctor. "Nay, it is nothing in that way. There is a lad in this city who knows me, and knows enough to suspect me; he may be troublesome, and I want him kept out of the way for a time."

"Do you mean kill him?" asked Manasses.

"I do not mean to kill the lad," said Doctor Langton, who then rang the bell, which brought up the landlord.

"More vodka, gentlemen?" said he.

"Ay, you had better send up another gill," returned Manasses. "Let Gregory bring it up. The gentleman wishes to have some conversation with the fellow."

The host withdrew, and in a few moments was succeeded by a broad-shouldered, coarse-featured man, with the profusion of unkempt hair which is one of the ordinary characteristics of the Russian lower orders.

"This gentleman," said Manasses, "requires a lad who is in his way to be made safe during his stay in St. Petersburg. You can manage that, Gregory?"

"Who is the boy?" the Russian inquired.

"An English youth in Salamansky's circus company," replied Dr. Langton. "I do not want him harmed—remember that. He is only to be safely detained somewhere until I give the word for his release."

Gregory nodded.

"The only difficulty," continued the doctor, "consists in the fact that he is generally accompanied by two other English lads and a girl, said to be English also, but who looks more like an Italian girl."

"I shall require help," said the Russian. "It will be a four hundred roubles' job."

"Too much, my friend," said Dr. Langton. "You must do it for three hundred."

"I could not make it pay for the risk at that price," returned Gregory. "I must have three assistants, or I will not answer for the success of the undertaking."

"The finances will not run to it," observed the doctor.

"Then there is no more to be said," returned the Russian, pouring out his second glass of vodka.

Dr. Langton did not see the matter from the same point of view as the Muscovite, however, and saw his way to the always desirable achievement of killing two birds with one stone.

"Four hundred?" he said, as if reconsidering the matter.

"That is the figure," responded Gregory.

"Well, throw me in the girl and it is a bargain," said the doctor.

"Agreed," returned the Russian. "But I must have half the money down, and the balance when the job is done."

"Very well," said the doctor. "Now, where will you take them to? They had better not be in the same house, I think, and I would rather have the girl somewhere out of the city."

Gregory scratched his head.

"Suppose I bring the boy here, and take the girl to a house I know, a lonely wayside inn on the Moscow road?" he said, after a pause.

"Very well," rejoined Dr. Langton. "They are to be well treated, mind. No unnecessary violence, and the best treatment after they are secured."

"All right," responded the ruffian.

The doctor took out his pocket-book, and took from it a note for two hundred roubles, which he handed to Gregory.

"The lad's name is Anderson, but he will answer to Nobbs," said he. "Make no mistake, and do the job so as to leave no clew by which he and the girl may be found."

"It is too late to do it to-night," returned the Russian. "But it shall be done to-morrow night. Where shall we meet?"

"Come here the day after," replied Langton.

Gregory drank the remainder of the liquor and retired.

"I shall learn whether he has succeeded, and if he does, I will give you the money for him," said the doctor. "I do not want to come to this den again, but you can come to my hotel after you have seen Gideon and made yourself presentable. Take this, and I will give you the English notes at the hotel."

He gave Manasses a card, and about five pounds sterling, and then they parted.

On the following night the wandering English performers engaged at Salamansky's circus were on the way to the lodgings, when, in passing through an ill-lighted street, they were suddenly attacked by four rough-looking men, one of whom, the reader will scarcely need to be informed, was Gregory.

Percy Bellingham was knocked down, and cloaks or shawls were simultaneously thrown over the heads of Willie Anderson and Lettie Lennard, who were then dragged through a passage into another street, where a four-wheeled cab was waiting.

Willie and Lettie were lifted into the vehicle, and three of the ruffians stepped in after them, holding the cloaks about them so as to smother the sound of their voices and render their struggles to release themselves unavailing.

The fourth man mounted the box, which was then driven off at a sharp pace.

Devilshoof, confused for a moment by the suddenness of the attack, ran through the passage, and saw the cab disappearing with a speed which only those who have seen a Russian hack carriage in full career can believe possible.

There was no one near, and he ran back to Percy, who was slowly and painfully gathering himself up, with one hand pressed against his head.

"Where are Lettie and Willie? What has happened?" he inquired.

Devilshoof told him what he had seen.

"Can this be the doing of Anderson's uncle, I wonder?" said Percy. "But why should Lettie have been kidnapped? We must find a policeman, Cupid."

"We had better find a doctor first," returned therobat. "Your head is bleeding."

Percy glanced at the hand which he had just removed from his head, and saw that it was wet with blood.

Binding his handkerchief over the wound, he began looking simultaneously for a surgeon and a policeman.

The former was found first, and having applied a plaster to his wounded head, directed him to the nearest station of the police.

He and Devilshoof made their statements to the inspector on duty, who took them down in writing, and promised that every endeavor should be made to discover the ruffians by whom Willie and Lettie had been kidnapped, and also the place to which the unfortunate young people had been taken.

The cab in the meantime had been driven rapidly, but by a circuitous route to the "Flying Horse," where Willie Anderson was lifted out, and carried in by a side door.

He made a desperate struggle to release himself, but the odds which he had to contend with

were too great, and he was carried along a passage and up a flight of stairs.

Then a door was opened, he was pushed into a room, and the cloak was whisked from his head.

Almost at the same moment the door was hastily closed, and he heard the key turned in the lock.

He was in darkness, darkness so profound that not an object in the room was discernible, nor was the faintest light to be detected.

Stepping cautiously from the spot on which he stood, he discovered a low bedstead, a stool, and a small table.

Other furniture there was none.

"Can this be my uncle's work?" he asked himself, as he thought of Dr. Langton's warning. "Is he going to have me murdered? The Lord have mercy upon me, if that is the fate reserved for me!"

He sat down, overcome by the reflection, and leaning his elbows on the table, buried his face in his hands.

CHAPTER XIV.

LETTIE LENNARD AT THE LONE INN—A VISIT FROM DOCTOR LANGTON—A MYSTERY SOLVED—THE DROSCHKY-DRIVER AND THE POLICE.

ON the following morning Levi Manasses visited Dr. Langton at his hotel.

Manasses was well dressed on this occasion in a suit of black, and having oiled and brushed his hair and beard, and perfumed his cambric handkerchief, might have passed for a financier whose name was a word of might on the bourses of Europe.

Dr. Langton smiled approvingly at the transformation which had been effected by the outlay of a few pounds, and invited Levi to take a seat.

"I have seen Gregory," said the latter.

"Has he succeeded?" the latter inquired.

"Completely," replied Manasses. "The boy is at the 'Flying Horse,' the girl at the other house he spoke of, the 'White Eagle,' about seven miles out on the road to Moscow."

"So far then all is well," said the doctor. "Now we will talk about the notes."

We need not follow them through the conversation, which related to the uttering of forged notes to a large amount, out of the first proceeds of which Gregory was to be paid the balance of the stipulated sum for the kidnapping of Willie Anderson and Lettie Lennard.

"Now for the 'White Eagle,'" said Dr. Langton, when Manasses had left him. "It is strange that this girl's face should haunt me so. It cannot be—yet why should it not?"

He pursued no further the train of thought which his intended visit to Lettie Lennard had started, but dressed for a drive and left the hotel.

At the corner of the Nevski Prospekt, he stepped into a droschky, first asking the driver whether he knew a house called the "White Eagle," situated about seven miles out, on the high road leading to the old capital.

The driver replied affirmatively, as he would probably have done if he had been asked if he knew the North Pole, and with a crack of the whip, and a sharp "tchick," away flew the horse along the level road, his long tail and mane streaming in the breeze.

The busy streets of the city were soon left behind, the straggling suburbs of wooden houses were passed through, and then only green fields were seen, varied here and there with small patches of woodland.

Here they passed a few cottages, and there a farmhouse, and a mile beyond this the droschky stopped before an old wooden house, with a rustic porch and carved balcony.

"This is the 'White Eagle,'" said the driver, as he sharply reined up his horse, the animal's flanks steaming and his mouth covered with foam.

"Wait for me," said Dr. Langton, as he stepped from the vehicle, and gave the man a rouble. "Let the horse have a feed and some water, and get something for yourself. I may be an hour."

The driver made a low bow, and the doctor entered the inn, where he was met by a stout, middle-aged woman, who regarded him with a close and comprehensive scrutiny.

"Gregory brought a girl here last night?" said the doctor.

"Yes, my lord."

"The rascal has not deceived me, then. I want to see the girl."

Preceded by the woman, he ascended a flight

of stairs, and was shown into a small, ill-furnished room.

Lettie Lennard rose as the door was opened, and, seeing Dr. Langton, retreated to the further side of the room, where she stood, silent and still, but with her heart beating with rapid pulsations.

The doctor bowed, but did not immediately speak.

The resemblance of the beautiful face he was gazing upon to another that he remembered was still perplexing him.

"Return to your seat," he at length said. "Unscrupulous as the means may have been by which you have been brought here, you have no violence to fear from me, Miss Lennard."

"I will not trust you, Dr. Langton," returned Lettie, retaining her position. "I know you too well to have the smallest faith in you."

"You know me?" said he, regarding her with a scrutinizing glance, but without evincing any surprise; "and you know me, or believe that you do, as one who is not to be trusted. In that particular, at least, I hope to show you that you are mistaken."

"To succeed, you must allow me to leave this house unmolested," said Lettie.

"I have already assured you that you have no violence to fear," said Dr. Langton; "but I cannot let you leave immediately. I have plans to carry out, which might be interfered with if you were at liberty."

"I understand you," returned Lettie. "You have some villainous scheme in hand against Willie Anderson."

"You are wrong, Miss Lennard," said the doctor, earnestly. "I have no scheme to execute concerning Willie Anderson that has not his benefit for its object."

"Have him acknowledged, then, by his uncle," said Lettie.

"My dear Miss Lennard," rejoined Dr. Langton, with a bland smile, "you are too young and inexperienced to judge fairly the complicated relations between Willie and his uncle, in which I hold the balance. We will talk of a more agreeable subject, if you please. I wish you would sit down."

Lettie advanced a few paces, and sat down, with the table between herself and the doctor.

"Now, sir, what have you to say to me?" she asked.

"Much," replied the doctor, drawing a chair to the table, and seating himself opposite to the girl. "In the first place I want to ask you where, and under what circumstances, you have known me. I have a good memory for faces, and yours is one not soon to be forgotten; but though your features remind me of a face I have seen elsewhere, there are discrepancies which I do not know how to reconcile."

"You have seen me before, and in more than one place," said Lettie. "Circus people wander far and wide, Dr. Langton, from St. Petersburg to Melbourne, and from Hong Kong to San Francisco."

"My wanderings have not extended beyond this continent," rejoined Dr. Langton, regarding her with curious interest. "Have I not seen you in London?"

"Possibly," she replied.

"Were you ever an Italian girl?" he asked, with a lurking smile at the corners of his mouth.

"Do you mean in a character act?" she asked.

"No," returned the doctor; "in the streets with a tambourine."

"Yes," said Lettie, making the avowal rather than tell an untruth.

"Ah?" ejaculated the doctor, leaning upon the table and regarding the girl steadfastly; "this is getting interesting. You have been the heroine of a mystery, then. You were once my guest at Grove House, Miss Lennard. Nay, don't deny it; I am sure of it."

"I am not going to deny it," returned Lettie. "I assumed the disguise to attract your attention, without betraying my identity with one you had seen before, and to gain admission to your house, that I might warn Willie Anderson of the danger which he, nevertheless, was unable to avoid."

"You must be greatly interested in that lad," observed the doctor.

Lettie blushed, but he did not observe the warm glow that for a moment enhanced her beauty.

He was thinking of something she had said before.

"You alluded just now," he said, after a pause, "to my having seen you before the occasion on which you personated an Italian tambourine player so admirably. Did you allude to our melo-dramatic meeting in Kent?"

"We had met before that," rejoined Lettie, a shadow coming over her beautiful countenance as she spoke.

"Ah!" exclaimed Dr. Langton, rising; "then you are—"

"Letitia Drannel!" said Lettie. "Now all mystery is at an end."

"What a beautiful little woman you have ripened into!" exclaimed the doctor, resuming his seat after his momentary emotion. "The features are the same, but what a difference in the expression."

"You know now why I cannot trust you," said Lettie. "I was but a child then, and yet you would have wrought my ruin, if I had not escaped from you, and thrown in my lot with strolling show people, rather than with you and the wretched old woman who sold me to you."

"You have had the best of the bargain, Lettie," returned the doctor; "so let bygones be bygones, and let us be friends."

"Never!" exclaimed Lettie, rising, and retreating to her former position.

"You need not assume that attitude, Miss Lennard," said Dr. Langton, with a smile. "You have my promise that no violence shall be used towards you; and, whatever you may think of me, it will be honorably kept. I will see you again to-morrow."

"My mind will be the same to-morrow as to-day," returned Lettie.

"Don't say that, Miss Lennard," said the doc-

tor, taking his hat. "It is the privilege of your sex to change your mind as often as you please. *Au revoir.*"

With a smile and a bow, he retired from her presence, and returned swiftly to St. Petersburg.

The driver watched him as he entered the hotel, and then drove, in the usual headlong manner of Russian drivers to the headquarters of the police.

"Well, Nicholas?" said the inspector, to whom he hastily presented himself.

"The Englishman!" exclaimed the droschky-driver. "Him that a reward is offered for, of I don't know how many hundred roubles; the note forgeries, you know."

"What of him?" inquired the inspector.

"He is here—in this city," replied Nicholas, gasping with excitement.

"Where?" inquired the inspector.

"At the English hotel in the Nevski Prospekt," replied the droschky-driver. "I took him up this morning at the further end of the street, drove him seven miles out, and have just driven him back to the hotel."

"Your information is worth something this time if you are not mistaken," observed the inspector, as he proceeded to turn over the leaves of a large, ledger-like book. "Now describe to me the man you have been driving."

"He's a fair-sized man, broad-chested, bald-headed, curly black hair at the back of his head,

broad, smooth forehead, aged about fifty, well-dressed, very pleasant-looking, and has a quiet manner and pleasant way of speaking."

Such was the droschky-driver's description of his fare.

"That is the description of the man we want," said the inspector, when he had compared it with the entries in the book before him. "Did you hear him called by any name, or see him in company with any man?"

"No," replied Nicholas; "he was alone when he hailed me, and he asked if I knew the 'White Eagle,' down the Moscow road. That is where I drove him to, and he gave me a rouble like a gentleman for myself and the horse, and stopped there about an hour."

"Very well," said the inspector, closing the book after writing down the man's statement, reduced to two or three lines; "if he is the man we want you will have the reward, which will make a fine day's work for you."

"By St. Isaac, it will!" exclaimed Nicholas, a smile spreading over his broad face.

But when a detective visited the hotel and inquired for an English gentleman of the description given by the droschky-driver, it was discovered that he had left about an hour before, having paid his bill and removed his baggage, stating that he was going to leave the city.

Will be concluded in "Wide Awake Library" No. 344, entitled: THE FORTUNES OF AN ACROBAT.

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